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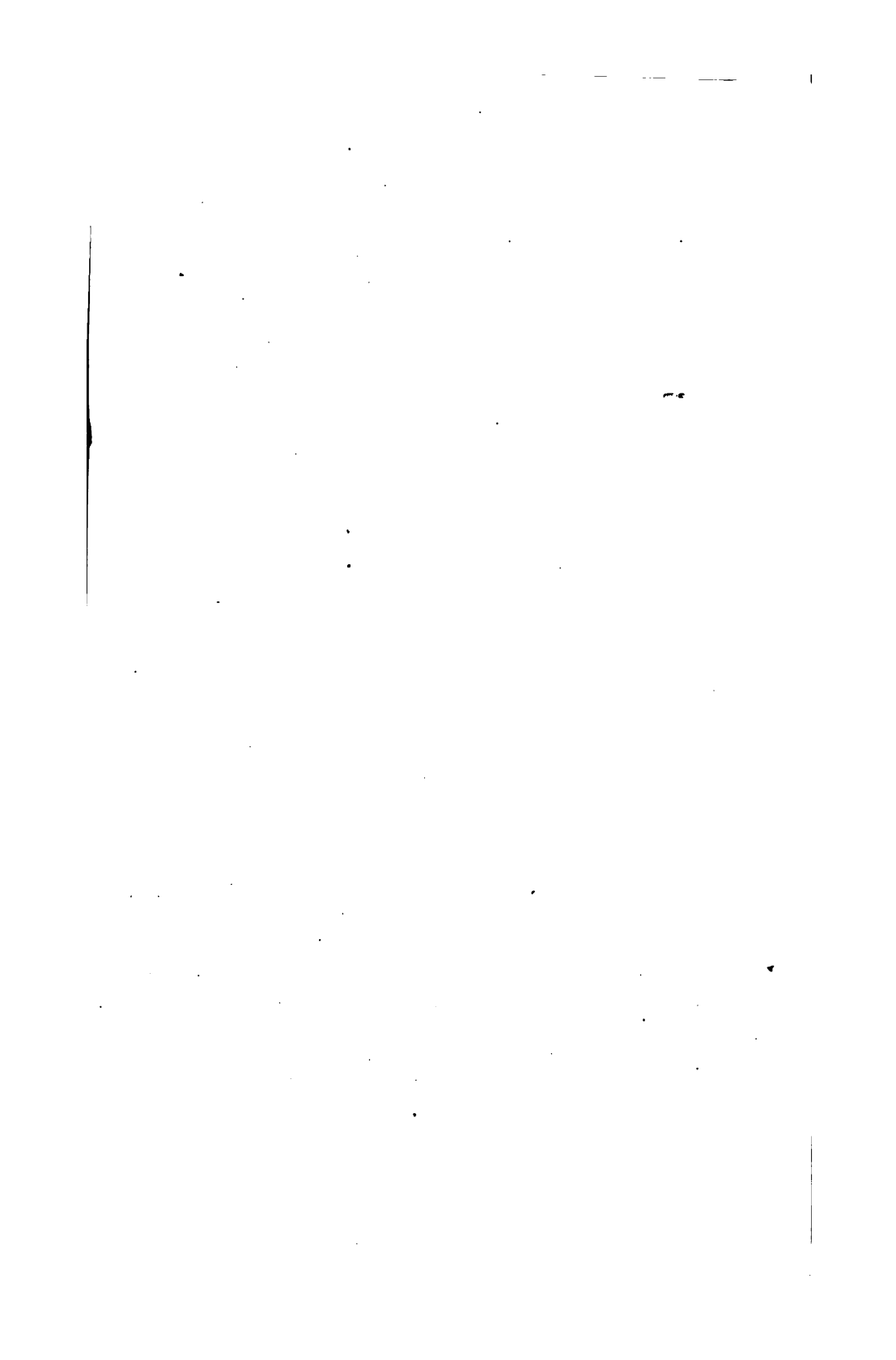
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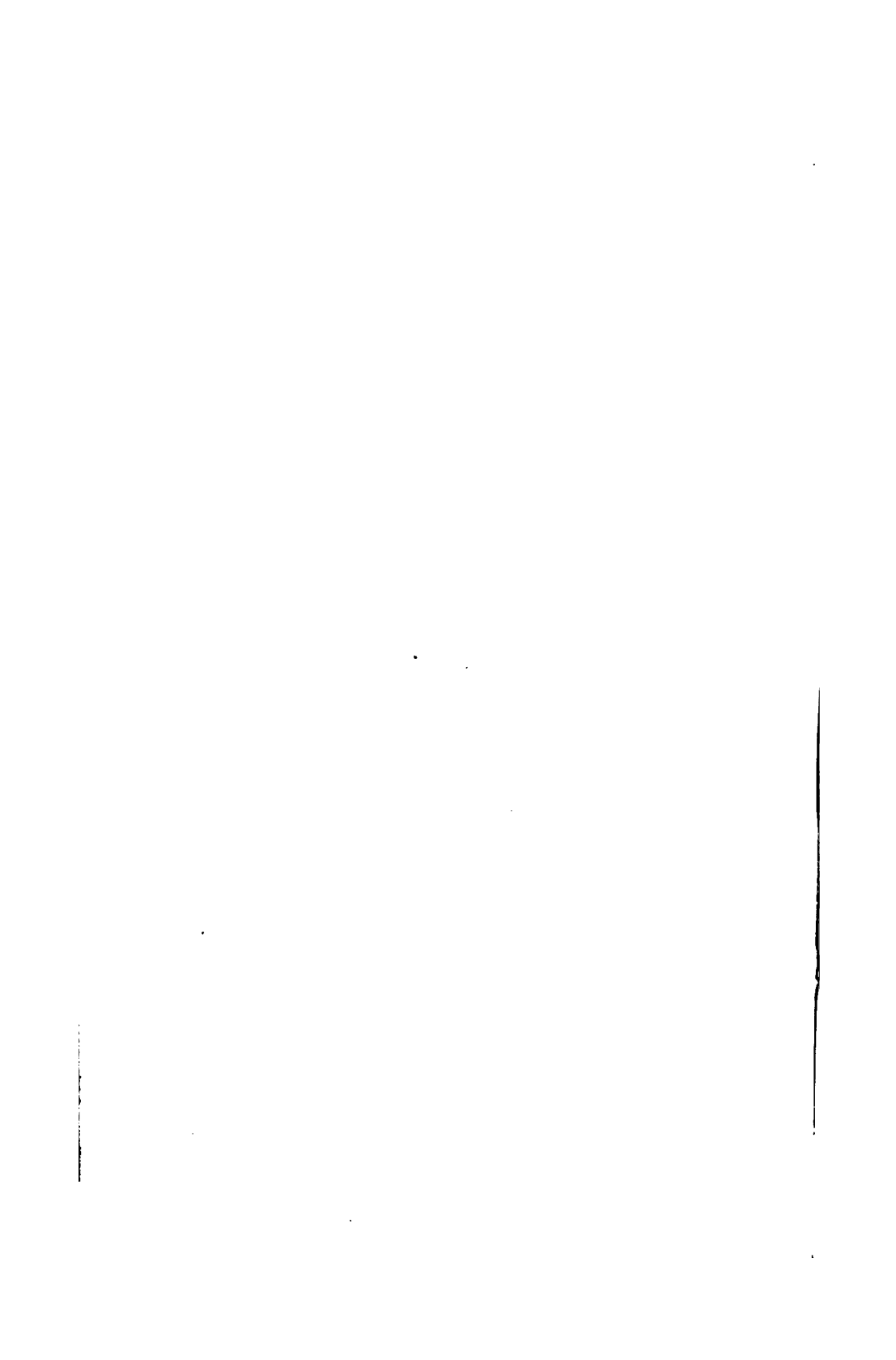


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**MARK HURDLESTONE.**



# MARK HURDLESTONE,

THE GOLD WORSHIPPER.

BY

MRS. MOODIE,

AUTHOR OF "ROUGHING IT IN THE BUSH; OR, LIFE IN CANADA;"  
"ENTHUSIASM."

The fire burns low, these winter nights are cold;  
I'd fain to bed, and take my usual rest.  
But duty cries, "There's work for thee to do;  
Stir up the embers, fetch another log,  
To cheer the empty hearth. This is the hour  
When fancy calls to life her busy train  
And thou must note the vision ere it flies."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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# MARK HURDLESTONE.

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## CHAPTER I.

Oh, human hearts are strangely cast,  
Time softens grief and pain ;  
Like reeds that shiver in the blast,  
They bend to rise again.—S. M.

“COME, Miss Whitmore, you must rouse yourself from this unwomanly grief. It is quite improper for a young lady of your rank and fortune to be shedding tears for the immoral conduct of a worthless young profligate.”

“Peace, Dorothy ; don’t scold the poor child. You see her heart is nearly broken. It will do her good to cry. Come, my own darling, come to your old father’s arms, and never mind what your aunt says to you.”

"Really, Captain Whitmore, if you mean to encourage your daughter's disrespectful conduct to me the sooner we part the better."

"Dolly, Dolly, have you no feeling for the poor child? Do hold that cruel tongue of yours. It never sounded so harsh and disagreeable to me before. Look up, my Julee, and kiss your old father."

And Juliet made an effort to raise her head from her father's bosom, and look in his face; but it would not do. The big tears weighed down her eyelids, and she sank back upon his shoulder, faintly murmuring, "And I thought him so good."

"Yes," said Miss Dorothy, whose temper was not at all softened by her brother's reproof. "You never would believe me. You would follow your own headstrong fancy; and now you see the result of your folly. I often wondered to see you reading and flirting with that silent down-looking young man, while his frank good-natured cousin was treated with contempt. I hope you will trust to my judgment another time."

"Aunt, spare me these reproaches. If I have acted imprudently, I am severely punished."

"I am sure the poor child was not worse deceived than I have been," said the Captain; "but the lad's to be pitied; he comes of a bad breed. But rouse up, my Julee—show yourself a girl of spirit. Go to your own room; a little sleep will do you a world of good. To-morrow you will forget it all."

"That poor girl," said Juliet, and a shudder ran through her frame. "How can I forget her? Her pale face—her sunken eyes—her look of unutterable woe. Oh, she haunts me continually; and I—I—may have been the cause of all this misery. My head aches sadly. I will go to bed. I long to be alone."

She embraced her father, and bade him good night, and curtseying to Aunt Dorothy, for her heart was too sore to speak to her, she sought the silence and solitude of her own chamber.

Oh, what luxury it was to be alone,—to know that no prying eyes looked upon her grief; no harsh voice, with unfeeling common-place, tore

open the deep wounds of her aching heart, and made them bleed afresh!

“Oh, that I could think him innocent!” she said. “Yet I cannot wholly consider him guilty. He looked—oh, how sad and touching was that look! It spoke of sorrow, but it revealed no trait of remorse; but then, would Mary, by her strange conduct, have condemned a man whom she knew to be innocent? Alas! it must be so, and ’tis a crime to love him.”

She sank upon her knees, and buried her face in the coverlid of the bed, but no prayer rose to her lips—an utter prostration of soul was there, but the shrine of her God was dark and voiceless; the waves of human passion had flowed over it, and marred the purity of the accustomed offering. Hour after hour still found her upon her knees, yet she could not form a single petition to the Divine Father. As Southey has beautifully expressed the same feelings in the finest of all his poems:—

“An agony of tears was all her soul could offer.”

Midnight came; the moon had climbed high in

the heavens. The family had retired for the night, and deep silence reigned through the house, when Juliet rose from her knees, and approaching the open casement, looked long and sadly into the serene tranquil depths of the cloudless night.

Who ever gazed upon the face of the divine mother in vain? The spirit of peace brooded over the slumbering world—that holy calm which no passion of man can disturb—which falls with the same profound stillness round the turmoil of the battle-field, and the bed of death—which enfolds in its silent embrace the eternity of the past—the wide ocean of the present. How many streaming eyes had been raised to that cloudless moon!—how many hands had been lifted up in heart-felt prayer to those solemn star-gemmed heavens! What tales of bitter grief had been poured out to the majesty of night! The eyes were quenched in the darkness of the grave; the hands were dust; and the impassioned hearts that once breathed those plaintive notes of woe, where, oh, where were they? The spirit that listened to the sorrows of their day had no revelation to make of their fate!

“And I, what am I, that I should repine and murmur against the decrees of Providence ? ” sighed Juliet. “The sorrows that I now endure have been felt by thousands who now feel no more. God, give me patience under every trial. In humble faith teach me resignation to Thy divine will.”

With a sorrowful tranquillity of mind she turned from the window, struck a light, and prepared to undress, when her attention was arrested by a letter lying upon her dressing-table. She instantly recognised the hand, and hastily breaking the seal, read with no small emotion the following lines :—

Say, dost thou think that I could be  
False to myself, and false to thee ?  
This broken heart and fever'd brain  
May never wake to joy again.  
Yet conscious innocence has given  
A hope that triumphs o'er despair ;  
I trust my righteous cause to heaven,  
And brace my tortured soul to bear  
The worst that can on earth befall,  
In losing thee—my life, my all !

The dove of promise to my ark,  
The pole-star to my wandering bark,

The beautiful by love enshrined,  
And worshipp'd with such fond excess ;  
Whose being with my being twined  
In one bright dream of happiness,  
Not death itself can rend apart  
The links that bind thee to my heart.

Spurn not the crush'd and wither'd flower ;  
There yet shall dawn a brighter hour,  
When ev'ry tear you shed o'er this  
Shall be repaid with tenfold bliss ;  
And hope's bright arch shall span the cloud  
That wraps us in its envious shroud.  
Then banish from thy breast for ever  
The cold ungenerous thought of ill ;  
Falsehood awhile our hearts may sever,  
But injured worth must triumph still.

Juliet did not for a moment doubt that Anthony Hurdlestone was the author of these lines, and involuntarily she pressed the paper to her lips. Realities are stern things, but Juliet could not now believe him guilty ; and with all the romance of her nature, she was willing to hope against hope ; and she retired to bed, comforted for her past sufferings, and as much in love with Anthony as ever.

While Juliet enjoyed a profound and tranquil sleep, her unfortunate lover was a prey to the



most agonising doubts and fears. "Surely, surely, she cannot think me guilty," thought the devoted Anthony, as he tossed from side to side upon his restless bed. "She is too generous to condemn me without further evidence. Yet, why do I cling to a forlorn hope? Stronger minds than hers would believe appearances which speak so loudly against me. But why should I bear this brand of infamy? I will go to her in the morning and expose the real criminal."

This idea, entertained for a moment, was quickly abandoned. "What, if he did expose his cousin's guilt, might not Godfrey deny the facts, and Mary, in order to shield her unprincipled lover, bear him out in his denial; and then his ingratitude to the father would be more conspicuously displayed in thus denouncing his son. No: for Algernon's sake he would bear the deep wrong, and leave to Heaven the vindication of his honour. He had made an appeal to her feelings; and youth, ever sanguine, fondly hoped that it had not been made in vain.

Another plan suggested itself to his disturbed

mind. He would inform Godfrey of the miserable situation in which he was placed, and trust to his generosity to exonerate him from the false charge, which Mary, in her waywardness or madness, had fixed upon him. Judging his cousin's mind by his own, he felt that he was secure—that, however painful to Godfrey's self-love, he would never suffer him to bear the reproach of a crime committed by himself.

Confident of success, he rose by the dawn of day, and sought his cousin's apartment. After rapping several times at the door, his summons was answered by Godfrey in a grumbling tone, between sleeping and waking.

"I must see you, Godfrey," cried Anthony, impatiently shaking the door. "My errand brooks no delay."

"What the deuce do you want at this early hour?" said Godfrey with a heavy yawn. "Now do be quiet, Tony, and give a man time to pull his eyes open."

Again the door was violently shaken. Godfrey had fallen back into a deep sleep, and Anthony,

in his eagerness to gain an audience, made noise enough to have roused the Seven Sleepers from their memorable nap. With a desperate effort Godfrey at length sprang from his bed, and unlocked the door, but, as the morning was chilly, he as quickly retreated to his warm nest, and buried his head in the blankets.

“Godfrey, do rouse yourself, and attend to me ; I have something of great consequence to communicate, the recital of which cannot fail to grieve you, if you retain the least affection for me.”

“Could not you wait until after breakfast ?” and Godfrey forced himself into a sitting posture. “I was out late last night, and drank too much wine. I feel confoundedly stupid, and the uproar that you have been making for the last hour at the door has given me an awful headache. But what is the matter with you, Tony ? You look like a spectre. Are you ill ? or have you, like me, been too long last night over your cups ?”

“You know I never drink, Godfrey, nor have I any bodily ailment ; but in truth my mind is ill

at ease. I am sick at heart, and you, you, cousin, are the cause of my present sufferings."

"Ah! the old love story. You repent of giving up Juliet, and want me to release you from your promise. I am not such a romantic fool! I never give up an advantage once gained, and am as miserly of opportunities as your father is of his cash. But speak out, Anthony," he continued, seeing his cousin turn pale. "I should like to hear what dreadful charge you have to bring against me."

"You shall hear, Godfrey, if I have strength and courage to tell you." Anthony sat down on an easy chair by the side of the bed, and after a long pause, in which he tried to compose his agitated feelings, he informed his cousin of the conversation that he had overheard between Mary and her brother, and what had subsequently happened. Godfrey listened with intense interest until he came to that part of the narrative where Mary, in her wandering mood, had confounded him with Anthony; and there, at the very circumstance which had occasioned

his cousin such acute anguish, and when he expected from him the deepest sympathy, how were his feelings shocked as, throwing himself back upon his pillow, Godfrey burst into a loud fit of laughter, exclaiming in a jocular and triumphant tone, "By Jove, Anthony, but you are an unlucky dog!"

This was too much for the excited state of mind under which Anthony had been labouring for some hours, and with a stifled groan he fell across the bed in a fit. Godfrey, alarmed in his turn, checked his indecent mirth, and dressing himself as quickly as he could, roused up his valet to run for the surgeon. The fresh air and the loss of a little blood soon restored the unfortunate young man to his senses, and to a deep consciousness of his cousin's ungentlemanly and base conduct.

Instead of being sorry for this unfortunate mistake, Godfrey secretly congratulated himself upon his singular good fortune, and laughed at the strange accident that had miraculously transferred the shame of his own guilt to his cousin.

"This will destroy for ever what little influence he possessed with Juliet, and will close the Captain's doors against him. If I do not improve my present advantage, may I die a poor dependent upon the bounty of a Hurdlestone!"

Again he laughed, and strode onward to the Lodge, humming a gay tune, and talking and whistling alternately to his dog.

He found Miss Dorothy and her niece at work; the latter as pale as marble, the tears still lingering in the long dark lashes that veiled her sad and downcast eyes. The Captain was rocking to and fro in his easy chair, smoking his pipe, and glancing first towards his daughter, and then at her starch prim-looking aunt, with no very com-  
plaisant expression.

"By Jove, Dorothy! if you continue to torment that poor child with your eternal sermons, you will compel me to send you from the house."

"A very fitting return for all my services," whimpered Miss Dorothy; "for all the love and care I have bestowed upon you and your ungrateful daughter! Send *me* from the house—turn *me*

out of doors ! *Me*, at my time of life," using that for argument's sake, which, if addressed to her by another, would have been refuted with indignation ; " to send *me* forth into the world, homeless and friendless, to seek my living among strangers ! Brother, brother, have you the heart to address this to me ? "

" Well, perhaps I was wrong, Dolly," replied the kind-hearted sailor, repenting of his sudden burst of passion ; " but you do so provoke me by your ill-humour, your eternal contradiction, and old-maidish ways, that it is impossible for a man always to keep his temper. It's a hard thing for a fellow's wife to have the command of the ship, but it seems deucedly unnatural for him to be ruled by a sister."

" Is it not enough, brother, to make a virtuous woman angry, when she hears the girl, whose morals she has fostered with such care, defending a wicked profligate wretch like Anthony Hurdlestone ? "

" Excuse me, aunt, I did not defend his conduct, supposing him guilty," said Juliet, with quiet

dignity; "for if that be really the case, such conduct is indefensible. I only hoped that we had been mistaken."

"Pshaw, girl! You are too credulous," said her father. "I have no doubt of his guilt. But here is Mr. Godfrey; we may learn the truth from him."

With an air of the deepest concern, Godfrey listened to the Captain's indignant recital of the scene he had witnessed in the park, and with his uncle Mark's duplicity, (only Godfrey was a laughing villain, always the most dangerous sinner of the two,) he affected to commiserate the folly and weakness of his cousin, in suffering himself to be entangled by an artful girl.

"He is a strange lad, a very strange lad, Captain Whitmore. I have known him from a child, but I don't know what to make of him. His father is a bad man, and it would be strange if he did not inherit some of his propensities."

"Weaknesses of this nature were not among his father's faults," said the Captain, "I must confess that I liked the young man, and he



had, I am told, a very amiable and beautiful mother."

"I have heard my father say so—but she was his first love, and love is always blind. I should think very little of the moral worth of a woman who could jilt such a man as my father, to marry a selfish miserly wretch like Mark Hurdlestone for his money."

"You are right, Mr. Hurdlestone," said Juliet. "Such a woman was unworthy of your father. Poor Anthony, he has been very unfortunate in his parents; yet I had hoped of him better things."

"You think, Mr. Godfrey, that there is no doubt of his guilt?" asked Miss Dorothy.

"The girl must know best," returned Godfrey, evading, whilst at the same moment he confirmed, the question. "He always admired her from a boy. We have had many disputes, nay downright quarrels, about her beauty. She was never a great favourite of mine. I admire gentle, not manlike women."

"He is a scoundrel!" cried the Captain,

throwing down his pipe with a sound that made his daughter start. "He shall never darken my doors again, and so you may tell him, Mr. Godfrey, from me!"

"This is a severe sentence, but he deserves it!" said Godfrey. "I fear my father will one day repent that he ever fostered this viper in his bosom. Yet, strange to say, he always preferred him to me. Report says that there is a stronger tie between them, but this is a base slander upon the generous nature of my father. He loved Anthony's mother better than he did mine; and he loves her son better than he does me."

"Poor lad," said the Captain, warmly grasping his hand. "You have been unkindly treated among them; and you shall always find a friend and a father in me."

Godfrey was a little ashamed of his duplicity, and would gladly, if possible, have recalled that disgraceful scene; but having so far committed himself, he no longer regarded the consequences; but determined to bear it out with the most hardened effrontery.

Whilst the victim of his diabolical art was writhing upon a sick bed under the most acute mental and bodily pain, the author of his suffering was enjoying the most flattering demonstrations of regard, which were lavishly bestowed upon him by the inhabitants of the Lodge. But the vengeance of Heaven never sleeps, and though the stratagems of wicked men may for a time prove successful, the end generally proves the truth of the Apostle's awful denunciation : *The wages of sin is death.*

## CHAPTER II.

Art thou a father? did the generous tide  
Of warm parental love e'er fill thy veins,  
And bid thee feel an interest in thy kind?  
Did the pulsation of that icy heart  
Quickened and vibrate to some gentle name,  
Breathed but in secret at its sacred shrine?—S. M.

SHORT was the time allowed to Anthony Hurdlestone to brood over his wrongs. His uncle's affairs had reached a crisis, and ruin stared him in the face. Algernon Hurdlestone had ever been the most imprudent of men; and under the fallacious hope of redeeming his fortune, he had, unknown to his son and nephew, during his frequent trips to London, irretrievably involved himself by gambling to a large extent. This false step completed what his reckless profusion had already begun. He found himself always on the losing side, but the indulgence of this fatal

propensity had become a passion, the excitement necessary to his existence. The management of his estates had always been entrusted entirely to a steward, who, as his master's fortunes declined, was rapidly rising in wealth and consequence. Algernon never troubled himself to enquire into the real state of his finances, whilst Johnstone continued to furnish him with money to gratify all the whims and wants of the passing moment.

The embarrassed state of the property was unknown to his young relatives, who deemed his treasures, like those of the celebrated Abulcasem, inexhaustible. Godfrey, it is true, had latterly received some hints from Johnstone how matters stood ; but his mind was so wholly occupied with his pursuit of Juliet Whitmore, and the unpleasant predicament in which he was placed by his unfortunate connexion with Mary Mathews, that he had banished the disagreeable subject from his thoughts.

The storm which had been long gathering at length burst. Algernon was arrested, his property seized by the sheriff, himself removed to the jail

of the county town of ——. Thither Anthony followed him, anxious to alleviate by his presence the deep dejection into which his uncle had fallen, and to offer that heartfelt sympathy so precious to the wounded pride of the sufferer.

The gay and joyous disposition of Algernon Hurdlestone yielded to the pressure of misfortune. His mind bowed to the heavy stroke, and he gave himself up to misery. His numerous creditors assailed him on all sides with their harassing importunities; and in his dire distress he applied to his rich brother, and, humbly for him, entreated a temporary loan of two thousand pounds until his affairs could be adjusted, and the property sold. This application, as might have been expected, was insultingly rejected on the part of the miser.

Rendered desperate by his situation, Algernon made a second attempt, and pleaded the expense he had been at in bringing up and educating his son, and demanded a moderate remuneration for the same. To this ill-judged application, Mark Hurdlestone returned for answer—"That

he had not forced his son upon his protection. That Algernon had pleased himself in adopting the boy. That he had warned him of the consequences when he took that extraordinary step: and that he must now abide by the result. That he, Algernon, had wasted his substance, like the prodigal of old, in riotous living, but that he, Mark, knew better the value of money, and how to take care of it."

"Your father, Tony, is a mean pitiful scoundrel!" cried the heart-broken Algernon, crushing the unfeeling letter in his hand, and flinging it with violence from him. "But I deserved to be treated with contempt, when I could so far forget myself as to make an application to him! Thirty years ago, I should have deemed begging my bread from door to door an act of less degradation. But, Tony, time changes us all. Misfortune makes the proudest neck bow beneath the yoke. My spirit is subdued, Tony, my heart crushed, my pride gone. I am not what I was, my dear boy. It is too late to recall the past. But I can see too late the errors of my conduct.

I have acted cruelly and selfishly to poor Godfrey, and squandered in folly the property his mother brought me, and which should have made him rich. And you, my dear Anthony, this blow will deprive you of a father, aye, and of one that loved you too. I would rather share a kennel with my dogs, than become an inmate of the home which now awaits you."

"Home!" sighed the youth. "The wide world is my home, the suffering children of humanity my lawful kinsmen."

Seeing his uncle's lip quiver, he took his hand and affectionately pressed it between his own, while the tears he could not repress fell freely from his eyes.—"Father of my heart! would that in this hour of your adversity I could repay to you all your past kindness. But cheer up, something may yet be done. My legitimate father has never seen me as a man. I will go to him. I will plead with him on your behalf, until nature asserts her rights, and the streams of hidden affection, so long pent up in his iron heart, overflow and burst asunder these bars of adamant.



Uncle, I will go to him this very day, and may God grant me success ! ”

“ It is in vain, Anthony. Avarice owns no heart, has no natural affections. You may go, but it is only to mortify your pride, agonise your feelings, and harden your kind nature against the whole world, without producing any ultimate benefit to me.”

“ It is a trial, uncle, but I will not spare myself. Duty demands the attempt, and successful or unsuccessful, it shall be made.”

He strode towards the door. Algernon called him back. “ Do not stay long, Tony. I feel ill and low-spirited. Godfrey surely does not know that I am in this accursed place. Perhaps he is ashamed to visit me here. Poor lad, poor lad ! I have ruined his prospects in life by my extravagance, but I never thought that it would come to this. If you see him on your way, Anthony, tell him (here his voice faltered), tell him, that his poor old father pines to see him, that his absence is worse than imprisonment—than death itself. I have many faults, but I love him only too well.”

This was more than Anthony could bear, and he sprang out of the room.

With a heart overflowing with generous emotions, and deeply sympathising in his uncle's misfortunes, he mounted a horse which he had borrowed of a friend in the neighbourhood, and took the road that led to his father's mansion ;—that father who had abandoned him, while yet a tender boy, to the care of another, and whom he had never met since the memorable hour in which they parted.

Oak Hall was situated about thirty miles from Norgood Park, and it was near sunset when Anthony caught the first glimpse of the picturesque church of Ashton among the trees. With mingled feelings of pride, shame, and bitterness he rode past the venerable mansion of his ancestors, and alighted at the door of the sordid hovel that its miserable possessor had chosen for a home.

The cottage in many places had fallen into decay, and admitted through countless crevices the wind and rain. A broken chair, a three-

legged stool, and the shattered remains of an oak table, deficient of one of its supporters, but propped up with bricks, comprised the whole furniture of the wretched apartment.

The door was a-jar that led into an interior room that served for a dormitory. Two old soiled mattresses, in which the straw had not been changed for years, thrown carelessly upon the floor, were the sole garniture of this execrable chamber. Anthony glanced around with feelings of an uncontrollable disgust, and all his boyish antipathy to the place returned. The lapse of nearly twenty years had not improved the aspect of his old prison-house, and he was now more capable of appreciating its revolting features. The harsh words, and still harsher blows and curses, which he had been wont to receive from the miser and his sordid associate, Grenard Pike, came up in his heart, and, in spite of his better nature, steeled that heart against his ungracious parent.

The entrance of Mark Hurdlestone, whose high stern features, once seen, could never be

forgotten, roused Anthony from his train of gloomy recollections, and called back his thoughts to the unpleasant business that brought him there.

Mark did not at the first glance recognise his son in the tall elegantly-dressed young man before him; and he growled out, "Who are you, sir, and what do you want?"

"Mr. Hurdlestone," said Anthony respectfully, "I am your son."

The old man sat down in the chair. A dark cloud came over his brow, as if he already suspected the nature of his son's mission, and he knitted his straight bushy eyebrows so closely together that his small fiery dark eyes gleamed like sparks from beneath the gloomy shade.

"My son; yes, yes. I've heard say that 'tis a wise son that knows his own father. It must be a very wise father who could instinctively know his own son. Certainly, I should never have recognised mine in the gay magpie before me. But sit down, young sir, and tell me what brought you here. Money, I suppose; money, the ever-

lasting want that the extravagant sons of pleasure strive to extort from the provident, who lay up during the harvest of life a provision for the winter of age. If such be your errand, young man, your time is wasted here. Anthony Hurdlestone, I have nothing to give."

"Not even affection, it would appear, to an only son."

"I owe you none."

"In what manner have I forfeited my natural claim upon your heart?"

"By transferring the duty and affection which you owed to me to another. Go to him who has pampered your appetites, clothed you with soft raiment, and brought you up daintily to lead the idle life of a gentleman. I disown all relationship with a useless butterfly."

Anthony's cheek reddened with indignation. "It was not upon my own account I sought you, sir. From my infancy I have been a neglected and forsaken child, for whom you never showed the least parental regard. Hard blows and harder words were the only marks of

fatherly regard that Anthony Hurdlestone ever received at your hands. To hear you curse me, when, starving with cold and hunger, I have asked you for a morsel of bread—to hear you wish me dead, and to see you watch me with hungry eager eyes, as if in my wasted meagre countenance you wished to find a prophetic answer—were sights and sounds of every-day occurrence. Could such conduct as this beget love in your wretched child? Yet, God knows!” exclaimed the young man, clasping his hands forcibly together, while tears started to his eyes—“God knows how earnestly I have prayed to love you, to forget and forgive these unnatural injuries, which have cast the shadow of care over the bright morning of youth, and made the world and all that it contains a wilderness of woe to my blighted heart.”

The old man regarded him with a sullen scowl; but whatever were his feelings (and that he did feel the whole truth of the young man’s passionate appeal, the restless motion of his foot and hand sufficiently indicated), he returned no

answer; and Anthony, emboldened by despair, and finding a relief in giving utterance to the long pent-up feelings which for years had corroded his breast, continued—

“I rightly concluded that I should be considered by you, Mr. Hurdlestone, an unwelcome visitor. Hateful to the sight of the injurer is the person of the injured, and I stand before you a living reproach, an awful witness both here and hereafter at the throne of God of what you ought to have been, and what you have neglected to be—a father to your motherless child. But let that pass. I am in the hands of One who is the protector of the innocent, and in His righteous hands I leave my cause. Your brother, sir, who has been a father to me, is in prison. His heart, sorely pressed by his painful situation, droops to the grave. I came to see if you, out of your abundance, are willing to save him. Father, let your old grudge be forgotten. Let the child of your poor lost Elinor be the means of reconciling you to each other. Cease to remember him as a rival; behold him only in the light of a brother—

of that twin brother who shared your cradle—of a friend whom you have deeply injured—a generous fellow-creature fallen, whom you have the power to raise up and restore. Let not the kind protector of your son end his days in a jail, when a small sum, which never could be missed from your immense wealth, would enable him to end his days in peace.”

“A *small* sum!” responded the miser, with a bitter laugh. “Let me hear what *you* consider a *small* sum. Your uncle has the impudence to demand of me the sum of *two thousand pounds*, which is *his idea* of a *small sum*, which he considers a *trifling remuneration* for bringing up and educating my son from the age of seven years to twenty. Anthony Hurdlestone, go back to your employer, and tell him that I never expended that sum in sixty years.”

“You do not mean to dismiss me, sir, with this cruel and insulting message?”

“From me, young man, you will obtain no other.”

“Is it possible that a creature, made in God’s



image, can possess such a hard heart? Alas! sir, I have considered your avarice in the light of a dire disease; as such I have pitied and excused it. The delusion is over. You are but too sane, and I *feel* ashamed of my father!"

The old man started and clenched his fist, his teeth grated together, he glared upon his son with his fiery eyes, but remained obstinately silent.

Regardless of his anger, the young man continued—"It is a hard thing for a son to be compelled to plead with his father in a cause like this. Is there no world beyond the grave? Does no fear of the future compel you to act justly? or are your thoughts so wholly engrossed with the dust on which you have placed all your earthly affections, that you will not, for the love of God, bestow a small portion of that wealth which you want the heart to enjoy, to save a brother from destruction? Oh! listen to me, father—listen to me, that I may love and bless you." He flung himself passionately at the old man's feet. "Give now, that you may possess

treasures hereafter, that you may meet a reconciled brother and wife in the realms of bliss ! ”

“ Fool ! ” exclaimed the miser, spurning him from his feet. “ In heaven they are neither married, nor given in marriage. Your mother and I will never meet again, and God forbid we should ! ”

Anthony shuddered. He felt that such a meeting was impossible ; and he started from the degraded posture he had assumed, and stood before the old man with a brow as stern and a glance as fierce as his own.

“ And now, Anthony Hurdlestone, let me speak a few words to you, and mark them well. Is it for a boy like you to prescribe rules for his father’s conduct ? Away from my presence ! I will not be insulted in my own house by a beardless boy, and assailed by such impertinent importunities. Reflect, young man, on your present undutiful conduct, and, if ever you provoke me by a repetition of it, I will strike your name out of my will, and leave my property to strangers more deserving of it. I hear that

you have been studying for the Church, under the idea that I will provide for you in that profession; I could do it. I would have done it, and made good a promise I once gave you to that effect. But this meeting has determined me to pursue another plan, and leave you to provide for yourself."

"You are welcome so to do, Mr. Hurdlestone," said Anthony, proudly; "the education which I have received at your brother's expense will place me above want. Farewell! and may God judge between us!"

With a heavy heart, Anthony returned to ——. He saw a crowd collected round the jail, and forcing his way to the entrance, was met by Godfrey; his face was deadly pale, and his lips quivered, as he addressed his cousin.

"You are too late, Anthony—'tis all over. My poor father——."

He turned away, for his heart, at that time, was not wholly dead to the feelings common to our nature. He could not conclude the sentence. Anthony instantly comprehended his meaning,

and rushed past him into the room which had been appropriated to his uncle's use.

And there, stretched upon that mean bed, never again to rise up, or whistle to hawk or hound, lay the generous reckless Algernon Hurdlestone. His face wore a placid smile; his grey hair hung in solemn masses round his open candid brow; and he looked as if he had bidden the cares and sorrows of time a long good night, and had fallen into a deep tranquil sleep.

A tall man stood beside the bed, gazing sadly and earnestly upon the face of the deceased. Anthony did not heed him—the arrow was in his heart. The sight of his dead uncle—his best, his dearest, his only friend—had blinded him to all else upon earth. With a cry of deep and heart-uttered sorrow, he flung himself upon the breast of the dead, and wept with all the passionate uncontrollable anguish which a final separation from the beloved wrings from a devoted woman's heart.

"Poor lad! how dearly he loved him!" remarked a voice near him, addressing the

person who had occupied the room when Anthony first entered. It was Mr. Grant, the rector of the parish, who spoke.

"I hope this sudden bereavement will serve him as a warning to amend his own evil ways," returned his companion, who happened to be no other than Captain Whitmore, as he left the apartment.

The voice roused Anthony from his trance of grief, and stung by the unmerited reproach, which he felt was misplaced, even if deserved, in an hour like that, he raised his dark eyes, flashing through the tears that blinded them, to demand of the Captain an explanation. But the self-elected monitor was gone; and the unhappy youth again bowed his head, and wept upon the bosom of the dead.

"Anthony, be comforted," said the kind clergyman taking his young friend's hand. "Your poor uncle has been taken in mercy from the evil to come. You know his frank generous nature—you know his extravagant habits and self-indulgence. How could such a

man struggle with the sorrows and cares of poverty, or encounter the cold glances of those whom he was wont to entertain? Think, think a moment, and restrain this passionate grief. Would it be wise, or kind, or Christian-like, to wish him back?"

Anthony remembered his interview with his father—the wreck of the last hope to which his uncle had clung; and he felt that Mr. Grant was right.

"All is for the best. My loss is his gain—but such a loss—such a dreadful loss!—I know not how to bear it with becoming fortitude!"

"I will not attempt to insult your grief by offering common-place condolence. These are but words, of course. Nature says, weep—weep freely, my dear young friend; but do not regret his departure."

"How did he die?—dear kind uncle! Was he at all prepared for such a sudden unexpected event?"

"The agitating occurrences of the last week had induced a tendency of blood to the head,

which ended in apoplexy. From the moment of seizure, he was insensible to all outward objects ; he did not even recognise his son, in whose arms he breathed his last. Of his mental state, it is impossible for us to determine. He had faults, but they were more the result of unhappy circumstances than of any peculiar tendency to evil in his nature. He was kind, benevolent, and merciful : a good neighbour, and a warm and faithful friend. Let us hope that he has found forgiveness through the merits of his Redeemer, and is at rest."

Anthony kissed his uncle's cold cheek, and said, "God bless him !" with great fervour.

"And now, my young friend, tell me candidly, in what way you have offended Captain Whitmore—a man both wealthy and powerful, and who has proved himself such a disinterested friend to your uncle and cousin ; and who might, if he pleased, be of infinite service to you ? Can you explain to me the meaning of his parting words ?"

"Not here—not here," said Anthony, greatly

agitated. "By the dead body of the father, how can a creature so long dependent upon his bounty denounce his only son? Captain Whitmore labours under a strong delusion—he has believed a lie; and poor and friendless as I now am, I am too proud to convince him of his error."

"You are wrong, Anthony. No one should suffer an undeserved stigma to rest upon his character. But I will say no more upon a painful subject. What are you going to do with yourself? Where will you find a home to-night?"

"Here with the dead. Whilst he remains upon earth I have no other home. I know Mr. Winthrop the jailer—he is a kind benevolent man; he will not deny me an asylum for a few days."

"My house is close at hand: remain with me until the funeral is over."

"There will be no delay, I hope. They will not attempt to seize the body."

"Captain Whitmore has generously provided for that. He paid the creditor on whose suit



your uncle was detained this morning ; but the Colonel was too ill to be moved."

"That was noble—generous. God bless him for that ! And Godfrey—what is to become of him ?"

"The Captain has insisted on his living at the Lodge until his affairs are settled. Your cousin bore the death of his father with uncommon fortitude. It must have been a terrible shock !"

"That is a sad misapplication of the word. A want of natural affection and sensibility, the world calls fortitude. Godfrey had too little respect for his father while living, to mourn very deeply for his death."

"Alas ! my young friend ; what he is, in a great measure, his father made him. I have known Godfrey from the petted selfish child to the self-willed extravagant dissipated young man ; and though I augur very little good from what I do know of his character, much that is prominently evil might have been restrained by proper management, and the amiable qualities which now lie dormant been cherished and

cultivated until they became virtues. The loss of fortune, if it leads him to apply the talents which he does possess to useful purposes, may, in the end, prove a great gain."

Anthony shook his head. "Godfrey will never work."

"Then, my dear sir, he must starve."

"He will do neither."

And the conversation between the friends terminated.

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had been done that man could do to alleviate the sufferings of the injured man, but with little effect. The man had received a mortal blow, and the doctor, when he left that evening, had pronounced the fatal sentence that his case was hopeless; that, in all probability, he would expire before the morning.

As the night drew on, the elder Mathews became quite unconscious of surrounding objects, and but for the quick hard breathing, you would have imagined him already dead.

The door of the cottage was open, to admit the fresh air; and in the doorway, revealed by the solitary candle which burnt upon the little table by the bed-side, stood the tall athletic figure of William Mathews. His sister was sitting in a low chair by the bed's head, her eyes fixed with a vacant stare upon the heavy features of the dying man.

"William," she said, in a quick deep voice, "where are you? Do come and watch with me. I do not like to be alone."

"You are not alone," returned the ruffian

sullenly; "I am here; and some one else is here whom you cannot see."

"Whom do you mean?"

"The devil, to be sure," responded her brother. "He is always near us; but never more near than in the hour of death and the day of judgment."

"Good Lord deliver us!" said the girl, repeating unconsciously aloud part of the liturgy of the Church to which nominally she belonged.

"All in good time," responded the human fiend. "Has father shown any sign of returning sense since the morning?"

"No, he has remained just in the same state. William, will he die?"

"You may be sure of that, Mary. Living men never look as he does now."

"It is a terrible sight," said his sister. "I always did hope that I should die before father; but since I got into this trouble I have wished that he might never live to know it. That was sin, William. See how my wicked thoughts have become prophecy. Yet I am so glad that he

never found out my crime, that it makes the tears dry in my eyes to see him thus."

"You make too much fuss about your condition, girl! What is done cannot be undone. All you can now do is to turn it to the best possible account."

"What do you mean, William?"

"Make money by it."

"Alas," said the girl, "what was given away freely cannot be redeemed with gold. Had I the wealth of the whole world, I would gladly give it to regain my lost peace of mind. Oh, for one night of calm fresh sleep, such as I used to enjoy after a hard day's work in the field. What would I not give for such a night's rest? Rest! I never rest now. I work and toil all day; I go to bed—heart-weary and head-weary—but sleep never comes as it used to come. After long hours of tossing from side to side, just about the dawn of day, a heavy stupor comes over me, full of frightful sights and sounds, so frightful that I start and awake, and pray not to sleep again."

"And what has made such a change—that one

act?" said the ruffian. "Pshaw! girl. God will never damn your soul for the like of that. It was foolish and imprudent; but I don't call *that* sin."

"Then what is sin?" said the girl solemnly.

"Why, murder, and theft,—and—"

"And what?"

"Hang me! if I wish to go deeper into the matter. But if that is sin, which you make such a to-do about, then the whole world are sinners."

"Do you think that you are not a sinner, William?"

"I never thought a word about it," said the man. "I am not a whit worse than others; but I am poorer, and that makes my faults more conspicuous. There is Godfrey Hurdlestone, every whit as bad as I am, yet were we to be tried by the same jury, the men that would hang me would acquit him. But his day is over," he continued, talking to himself. "He is now as poor as me; and if the rich heiress does not marry him, will be much worse off."

"Marry!" cried Mary, springing from her

seat, and grasping her brother's arm. "Who talks of Godfrey Hurdlestone marrying?"

"I talk of it—every one talks of it—he boasts of it himself. I was told last night by Captain Whitmore's serving-man, that his master had given his consent to the match, and that the young lady was coming round, and that Mr. Godfrey was every day at the house. Perhaps the Colonel being cooped up in jail may spoil the young man's wooing."

"In jail! Colonel Hurdlestone in jail! Can that be true?"

"Fact."

"And Mr. Godfrey? What will become of Mr. Godfrey?"

"He will become one of us, and have to take care of himself. And if he does marry Miss Whitmore, he will have enough to take care of you."

"Do you think that I would share his affections with another woman?" cried the girl, her pale cheeks flushing to crimson. "Brother, I am not sunk so low as that—not quite so low."



"You are sunk quite low enough for anything, Mary. You may be as bad as you like now, the world will think no worse of you than it does at present. You have made a bad bargain, and you must stand by it. If you cannot be the man's wife, you must rest content with being his mistress; married or single you will always be Godfrey Hurdlestone's better half. Miss Whitmore is not to compare to you, in spite of her pretty waxen face, and she is not the woman to please such a wild fellow as him. He will grow tired of her before the honeymoon is over, and you will have it all your own way."

"Juliet Whitmore shall never be his wife, nor any other woman, while I live. But, William, if he is as poor as you say he is, what use will it be to you my continuing to live with him in sin? He cannot give me money if he has none for himself."

"Hush," said the ruffian, drawing nearer, and glancing quickly round, to be certain that they were alone. "Did you never hear of the rich miser, Mark Hurdlestone?"

"Mr. Anthony's father?"

"The same. And do you not know, that were Anthony out of the way, removed by death or any other cause, Godfrey Hurdlestone would be his heir?"

"Well, what of that? Anthony is alive and well, and may outlive us all."

"Strong men often die very suddenly. There is an ill-luck hangs about this same Mr. Anthony. I prophesy that his life will be a short one. Hark! Was that a groan? Father is coming to himself."

He took the candle and went up to the bed. The sick man still breathed, but remained in the same stupor as before. "This cannot last long," said his son, stooping over the corpse-like figure. "Father was a strong man for his age, but 'tis all up with him now. I wish he could speak to us, and tell us where he is going; but I'm thinking that we shall never hear the sound of his voice again. The bell will toll for him before sunrise to-morrow."

He had scarcely finished speaking when the

slow deep boom of the death-bell awoke the sluggish stillness of the heavy night. The brother and sister started, and Mary gave a loud scream.

"Who's dead?" said Mathews, stepping to the open door: "some of the quality, or that bell would not speak out at this late hour of night. Ha! Mr. Godfrey Hurdlestone. Is that you?"

"What's wrong here?" cried Godfrey, glancing rapidly round the cottage. "Mathews, have you heard the news? My poor father's dead."

"Dead!" exclaimed both his companions in a breath. "Colonel Hurdlestone dead! When did he die?"

"This evening at sunset. 'Tis a bad piece of business, Mathews. He died insolvent, and I am left without a penny."

"Alas, what will become of us all!" shrieked Mary, flinging herself frantically upon the bed. "William, he has ceased to breathe. Our father too is dead!"

The grief of the lower orders is generally loud and violent. Unaccustomed to restrain their feelings, Nature lifts up her voice, and tells in

tones which cannot be misunderstood the blow which has left her desolate. And so Mary Mathews poured forth the anguish of her soul over the parent that, but a few days before, she had wished dead, to conceal from him her guilt. Yet now that he was gone, that the strong tie was broken, and her conscience reproached her for having cherished for a moment the unnatural thought, she wept as if her heart had never known a deeper sorrow. Her brother and lover strove in vain to comfort her. She neither saw nor heeded them, but in a stern voice bade them depart, and leave her alone.

“The wilful creature! Let her have her own way, Mr. Godfrey. Grief like that, like the down-pouring of a thunder-shower, soon storms itself to rest. She will be better soon. Leave her to take care of the dead, while you and I step into the kitchen and consult together about the living.”

Godfrey, who had suffered much that day from mental excitement, felt doubly depressed by the scene he had just witnessed, and gladly obeyed.

Mathews lighted a fresh candle, and led the way into the kitchen. The fire that had been used to prepare the evening meal was nearly out; Mathews raked the ashes together, and threw a fresh billet into the grate; then reaching from a small cupboard a bottle and a glass, he drew a small table between them, and stretching his legs towards the cheering blaze he handed a glass of brandy to his companion.

"Hang it, man! don't look so down in the mouth. This is the best friend in time of need. This is my way of driving out the blue devils that pinch and freeze my heart."

Godfrey eagerly seized the proffered glass and drained it at a draught.

"Well, that's what I call hearty!" continued the ruffian, following his example. "There's nothing like that for killing care. I don't wonder at your being low. I feel queer myself—devilish queer. It is a strange thing to lose a father. A something is gone—a string is loosened from the heart, which we feel can never be tied again. I wonder whether the souls gone from among us

to-night are lost or saved—or if there be a heaven or hell?”

“Pshaw!” said Godfrey, lighting his pipe, “do you believe such idle fables?”

“Why, do you see, Master Godfrey, I would fain think them false for my own sake,—mere old women’s tales. But terrible thoughts will come into my mind; and though I seldom think of heaven, I often hear a voice from the shut-up depths of my heart—a voice that I cannot stifle. Do not smile,” said the man gloomily, “I am in no mood to be laughed at. Bad as I am, confound me, if you are not ten times worse.”

“If you are so afraid of going to hell,” said Godfrey, sarcastically, “why do you not amend your life? I, for my part, am troubled with no such qualms of conscience.”

“If you had seen blood as often upon your hand as I have upon mine, you would tell a different story. Kill a man, and then see if things we hear of ghosts and spirits are mere fables. I tell you, Godfrey Hurdlestone, they never die, but live and walk abroad, and haunt you continu-

ally. The voice they speak with will be heard. In solitary places—in the midst of crowds—at fairs and merry-makings—in the noon of day, and at the dead of night, I have heard their mocking tones.” He leaned his elbows upon his knees, and supported his chin between the palms of his hands, and continued to stare upon Godfrey with vacant bloodshot eyes.

“Don’t take me for a ghost,” said Godfrey, the same sarcastic smile passing over his handsome face. “What does it matter to us where our fathers are gone? If there is a place of future rewards or punishments, depend upon it we shall only have to answer for our own sins; and as you and I have, at present, but a small chance of getting to heaven, we may as well make the most of our time on earth.”

“Confound that death-bell,” said the smuggler, “it has a living voice to-night. I never hear it but it reminds me of Newgate, and I fancy that I shall hear it toll for my own death before I die.”

“A very probable consummation, though certainly not a very pleasant one,” said Godfrey

ironically. "But away with such melancholy presages. Take another sup of the brandy, Mathews, and tell me what you are going to do for a living. The lease of your farm expires in a few days. Mr. — has taken possession of the estates, and means, Johnstone tells me, to put in another tenant. What will become of you and Mary in the meanwhile?"

"I have not thought about it yet. At any rate, I can always live by the old trade, and fall upon my feet. At all events, we must leave this place. It is little that father has saved. The neighbours think him rich, but a drunkard never dies rich; and you know, Mr. Godfrey, that the weight of a pig is never known until after it is dead. There will not be much more than will bury him. There are the crops in the ground, to be sure, and the cattle, and a few sticks of furniture; but debts of honour must be paid, and I have been very unlucky of late. By the by, Master Godfrey, what does your cousin mean to do with himself?"

"He must go home to his miserly dad, I suppose."



"Humph! I think that I will go to Ashton, and settle in that neighbourhood myself; I like to be near old friends."

"What can induce *you*, Mathews, to go there?"

"I have my reasons. Strong reasons too, in which I am sure *you* will heartily concur." He looked into his companion's eyes, with an expression so peculiar, that Godfrey started as if some new light had suddenly flashed upon his soul, while Mathews continued in a lower voice—"Suppose, now, that we could get up a regular quarrel between old Ironsides and his son, who would then be the miser's heir?"

Godfrey took the hand of the smuggler and grasped it hard.

"Can you form no better scheme than that?"

"I understand you, Mr. Godfrey. You are a perfect genius in wickedness. The devil never found a fitter agent for doing his business on a grand scale. Yes, yes, I understand you."

"Would it be possible?"

"All things are possible to those who have the courage to perform. If I could remove this

obstacle out of your way, what would be my reward?"

"A thousand pounds!"

"Your conscience! Do you think that I would risk my neck for such a paltry bribe?"

"You have done it often for the hundredth part."

"That's neither here nor there. If I have played the fool a dozen times, that's no reason that I am to do so again. Go shares, and promise to make an honest woman of Mary, and you shall not be long out of possession."

"The sacrifice is too great," said Godfrey, musing. "Let us say no more about it at present."

"You will think about it."

"Thoughts are free."

"Not exactly. Evil thoughts lead to evil deeds, as surely as fruit follows flowers upon the tree. Try to lay that babe of the brain to rest, and see if it will not waken to plague you yet."

"It was one of your own begetting. You should know best how to quiet the imp."

"Leave me alone for that. The day is breaking ; we must part. We have both melancholy duties to perform."

"I wish the funeral was over," said Godfrey ; "I hate being forced to act a conspicuous part in such a grave farce."

"Your cousin will help you out. He is the real mourner ; you, the actor. Remember what I hinted to you, and let me know your opinion in a few days."

"The risk is too great," said Godfrey, shrugging his shoulders. "When I am reduced to my last shift, it will be time enough to talk of that."

The grey misty dawn was just struggling into day, when Godfrey left the cottage. Mathews looked after him, as, opening a side gate that led to a foot-path that intersected the park, he vanished from his sight.

"Well, there goes the greatest scoundrel that ever was unhung," he muttered to himself. "He has never shed blood, or done what I have done ; but hang me, if I would exchange characters with

him, bad as I may be. He thinks to make a fool of me ; but if I do not make him repay a thousand fold the injuries he has heaped on me and mine, may we swing on the same gallows."

In no very enviable mood, Godfrey pursued his way through the lonely park. The birds had not yet sung their matin hymn to awaken the earth. Deep silence rested upon the august face of nature. Not a breath of air stirred the branches heavy with dew-drops. The hour was full of beauty and mystery. An awe fell insensibly upon the heart, as if it saw the eye of God visibly watching over the sleeping world. Its holy influence was felt even by the selfish heartless Godfrey.

The deep silence—the strange stillness—the uncertain light—the scenes he had lately witnessed—his altered fortunes—his degrading pursuits—the fallen and depraved state of his mind, crowded into his thoughts, and filled his bosom with keen remorse and painful regrets.

"Oh, that I could repent !" he cried, stopping, and clasping his hands together, and fixing his eyes mournfully upon the earth,—“that I could believe

that there was a God—a heaven—a hell! Yet if there be no hereafter, why this stifling sense of guilt—this ever-haunting miserable consciousness of unworthiness? Am I worse than other men, or are all men alike—the circumstances in which they are placed producing that which we denominate good or evil in their characters? What if I determine to renounce the evil, and cling to the good; would it yet be well with me? Would Juliet, like a good angel, consent to be my guide, and lead me gently back to the forsaken paths of rectitude and peace?"

While the voice in his heart yet spake to him for good, another voice sounded in his ears, and all his virtuous resolutions melted into air.

"Godfrey," said the voice of Mary Mathews, "dear Mr. Godfrey, have I become so indifferent to you, that you will neither look at me nor speak to me?"

She was the last person in the world who at that moment he wished to see. The sight of her recalled him to a sense of his degradation, and all that he had lost by his unhappy connexion with her, and

he secretly wished that she had died instead of her father.

"Mary," he said, coldly, "what do you want with me? The morning is damp and raw; you had better go home."

"What do I want with you?" reiterated the girl. "And is it come to that? Can you, who have so often sworn to me that you loved me better than anything in heaven or on earth, now ask me, in my misery, what I want with you?"

"Hot-headed rash young men will swear, and foolish girls will believe them," said Godfrey, putting his arm carelessly round her waist, and drawing her towards him. "So it has been since the world began, and so it will be until the end of time."

"Was all you told me, then, false?" said Mary, leaning her head back upon his shoulder, and fixing her large beautiful tearful eyes upon his face.

That look of unutterable fondness banished all Godfrey's good resolutions. He kissed the tears from her eyes, as he replied—

"Not exactly, Mary. But you expect too much."

"I only ask you not to cease to love me—not to leave me, Godfrey, for another."

"Who put such nonsense into your head?"

"William told me that you were going to marry Miss Whitmore."

"If such were the case, do you think I should be such a fool as to tell William?"

"Alas! I am afraid that it is only too true." And Mary burst into tears afresh. "You do not love me as you did, Godfrey, when we first met and loved. You used to sit by my side for hours, looking into my face, and holding my hand in yours; and we were happy—too happy to speak. We lived but in each other's eyes; and I hoped—fondly hoped—that that blessed dream would last for ever. I did not care for the anger of father or brother—woe is me! I never had a mother. One kiss from those dear lips—one kind word breathed from that dear mouth—sunk from my ear into my heart, and I gloried in what I ought to have considered my shame. Oh, why

are you changed, Godfrey? Why should my love remain like a covered fire, consuming my heart to ashes, and making me a prey to tormenting doubts and fears, while you are unmoved by my anguish, and contented in my absence?"

"You attribute that to indifference, which is but the effect of circumstances," returned Godfrey, somewhat embarrassed by her importunities. "Perhaps, Mary, you are not aware that the death of my father has left me a poor and ruined man?"

"What difference can that possibly make in our love for each other?" And Mary's eyes brightened through a cloud of tears. "I rejoice in your loss of fortune, for it has made us equals."

"Not quite!" cried the young man, throwing her from him, as if stung by an adder. "Birth, education, the prejudices of society, have placed an eternal barrier between us. Impoverished though I be, I never can so far forget myself as to mate with a vulgar peasant!"

"Say that word again—that word of misery!"



cried the unhappy girl, clinging to his arm. "Recall your many promises—the awful oath you swore on that fatal night, when I first yielded to temptation, when you solemnly declared, in the name of Almighty God, that the moment you were your own master, you would make me your wife."

"Mary," said Godfrey, sternly, "do not deceive yourself—I never will make you my wife!"

"Then God forgive you, and grant me patience to bear my wrongs!" murmured the poor girl, as she sunk down upon the ground, and buried her face in the dewy grass; while her heartless seducer continued his solitary walk to the Lodge.

## CHAPTER IV.

My mind is like a vessel tossed at sea  
By winds and waves—her helm and compass lost.  
No friendly hand to guide her o'er the waste,  
Or point to rocks and shoals that yawn beneath.—S.M.

THE day after his uncle's funeral, as Anthony sat alone in the good rector's study, pondering over his recent loss, painfully alive to his present condition, and the uncertainty of his future prospects, he was informed by the servant that a gentleman wished to see him.

Since Algernon's death, he and Godfrey had not met except at the funeral, in which they had assisted as chief mourners. He was very anxious to speak to his cousin, and consult with him about their private affairs; and he obeyed the summons with alacrity. Instead of the person whom he expected to see, a well-dressed

intelligent-looking young man advanced to meet him.

“Mr. Anthony Hurdlestone,” he said, “I hope you will not consider my present visit an intrusion, when I inform you that I am your near kinsman, the son of that Edward Wildegrave who held the office of judge for so many years in India, in which country he died about six years ago. My father and your mother were first cousins by the father’s side. Brought up in a distant part of England, I never had an opportunity of falling in with the only remaining branch of the Wildegrave family; and it was not until the death of my father, which left me an independent man, that I was even aware of your existence. A few months ago I bought the property of Milbank, in the parish of Ashton, which once belonged to my unfortunate uncle; and I heard your history from the wife of our farm servant, Ruth Candler. This led me to make many inquiries about you; and Ruth’s relations were fully confirmed by the statements of my lawyer. His account of your early trials and singular

position created in my mind such an intense interest in your fate, that I lost no time in riding over to offer my services, and a share of my house, until you can arrange your plans for the future. I hope you will not refuse to grant me this favour. My offer is made in the sincerity of friendship; and I shall be deeply disappointed if you refuse to accept it."

"I will most thankfully accept it," said Anthony, his fine face glowing with pleasure at this unexpected meeting. "But are you certain, Mr. Wildegrave, that my doing so will in no way inconvenience you?"

"Inconvenience me? — a bachelor! Your society will be a great acquisition."

"And poor Ruth Candler—is she still living? She was a mother to me during my motherless infancy, and I shall be so glad to see her again. As to you, Mr. Wildegrave, I cannot express half the gratitude I feel for your disinterested kindness. The only circumstance which casts the least damp upon the pleasure I anticipate in my visit to Ashton, is the near vicinity of my father,

who may take it into his head to imagine that I come there in order to be a spy upon his actions."

"I know the unhappy circumstances in which you are placed; yet I think that we shall be able to overrule them for your good. However disagreeable your intercourse with such a man must be, it is not prudent to lose sight of him altogether. While you are in his immediate neighbourhood, he cannot easily forget that he has a son. That artful designing old scoundrel, Grenard Pike, will do all in his power to keep you apart. Your living with me will not affect Mr. Hurdlestone's pocket; and his seeing you at church will remind him, at least once a week, that you are alive."

"Church! Can a man destitute of charity feel any pleasure in attending a place of worship, that teaches him that his dearest enjoyment is a deadly sin?"

"It seems a strange infatuation; but I have remarked, that, let the weather be what it may, neither cold nor heat, nor storm nor shine, ever

keeps Mark Hurdlestone from church. He is still in the old place; his fine grey locks flowing over his shoulders, with as proud and aristocratic an expression on his countenance as if his head were graced with a coronet, instead of being bound about with an old red handkerchief, which he wears in lieu of a hat; the rest of his person clothed in rags, which a beggar would spurn from him in disdain."

"Is he insensible to the disgust which his appearance must excite?"

"He seems perfectly at ease. His mind is too much absorbed in mental calculations to care for the opinion of any one. If you sit in the family pew, which I advise you to do, you will have to exercise great self-control to avoid laughing at his odd appearance."

"I am too much humiliated by his deplorable aberration of mind to feel the least inclination to mirth. I wish that I could learn to respect and love him, as a father should be respected and loved; but since my last visit to Ashton, my heart is hardened against him. A dislike almost

amounting to loathing, has usurped the place of the affection which nature ever retains for those who are bound together by kindred ties."

"If you were more accustomed to witness his eccentricities, you would be less painfully alive to their absurdity. Use almost reconciles us to anything. If you were to inhabit the same house with Mark Hurdlestone, and were constantly to listen to his arguments on the love of money, you might possibly fall in love with hoarding, and become like him a worshipper of gold."

"Avarice generally produces a reaction in the minds of those who witness its effects," said Anthony. "I will not admit the truth of your proposition, for experience has proved that the son of a miser commonly ends in being a spend-thrift."

"With some exceptions," said Frederic Wildegrave, with a good-humoured smile. "But really when he pleases, your father can be a sensible agreeable companion, and quite the gentleman. The other day I had a long chat with him, partly upon business, partly from

curiosity. I wanted to buy from him an odd angle of ground, about half an acre, that made an awkward bite into a favourite field. I went to him, and, knowing his habits, I offered him at once the full value of the land. He saw that my heart was set upon the purchase, and he trebled the price. I laughed at him ; and we held a long palaver of about two hours, and never came one inch the nearer to a settlement of the question. At length I pulled out my purse, and counted the gold down upon the table before him. 'There is the money,' I said. 'I have offered you, Mr. Hurdlestone, the full value of the land. You can take it or leave it.'

"The sight of the gold acted upon him like the loadstone upon the needle. He began counting over the pieces ; his fingers literally stuck to them. One by one they disappeared from my sight, and when all were gone, he held out his hand and begged for one guinea more. I put the pen into his hand, and the paper before him ; he sighed heavily as he signed the receipt for the full sum, and told me that I was a prudent young man ;



that I deserved to be rich ; and must succeed in the world, for I knew as well how to take care of my money as he did. He then entered upon subjects of more general interest, and I was so much pleased with his talents and general information (chiefly obtained, I believe, from books, which are his sole amusement, and with which he is amply furnished from the library at the Hall), that I invited myself to come over and spend an evening with him. The old fox took the alarm at this. He told me that he was quite a recluse, and never received company ; but that some evening, when I was quite alone, he would step in and take a cup of coffee with me,—a luxury which he has never allowed himself for the last twenty years.”

The conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Mr. Grant. Young Wildegrave entered immediately upon the purport of his visit, and the rector, who had a very large family to support upon very limited means, readily consented to Anthony’s removal to Ashton.

The morning was spent in preparing for his

journey, and not without a feeling of regret Anthony bade adieu to his kind host, and the place in which he had passed the only happy years of his life.

As his friend slowly drove through Norgood Park, and past Hazelwood Lodge, he turned an anxious gaze towards the house. Why did the colour flush his cheek as he hastily looked another way? Juliet was standing in the balcony, but she was not alone; a tall figure was beside her. It was Godfrey Hurdlestone, and the sight of him at such a time, and so situated, sent a pang of anguish through the heart of the young lover.

Frederic Wildegrave marked the deep dejection into which his companion had fallen, and rightly concluded that some lady was the cause. "Poor fellow," thought he, "has he, to add to his other misfortunes, been indiscreet enough to fall in love?"

Wishing to ascertain if his suspicions were true, he began to question Anthony about the inhabitants of the Lodge, and soon drew from his frank and confiding cousin the history of his

unhappy passion, and the unpleasant misapprehension that had closed Captain Whitmore's doors against him.

"Well, Anthony," he said, "it must be confessed that you are an unlucky fellow. The sins of your father appear to cast a shadow upon the destinies of his son. Yet, were I in your place, I should write to Captain Whitmore, and clear up this foul stigma that your treacherous cousin has suffered to rest upon your character."

"No," said Anthony, "I cannot do it; I am too proud. She should not so readily have admitted my guilt. Let Godfrey enjoy the advantage he has gained. I swore to his father to be a friend to his son, to stand by him through good and bad report; and though his cruel duplicity has destroyed my happiness, I never will expose him to the only friend who can help him in his present difficulties."

"Your generosity savours a little too much of romance; Godfrey is unworthy of such a tremendous sacrifice."

"That does not render my solemn promise to

my uncle less binding. Forbearance on my part is gratitude to him; and my present self-denial will not be without a reward."

Frederic was charmed with his companion, and could Anthony have looked into his heart, he would have been doubly convinced that he was right.

They struck into a lonely cross-country road, and half-an-hour's smart driving brought them to Wildegrave's residence. It was a pretty farmhouse, surrounded by extensive orchards, and a large upland meadow, as smooth as a bowling-green. Anthony was delighted by the locality. The peaceful solitude of the scene was congenial to his feelings, and he expressed his pleasure in lively tones.

"'Tis an old-fashioned place," said Frederic; "but it will not be without interest to you. In that chamber to the right, your grandfather and your mother were born."

"They were both children of misfortune," replied Anthony. "But the fate of my grandfather, although he died upon the scaffold,

beneath the cruel gaze of an insulting mob, was a merciful dispensation to the death, by inches, which awaited his unhappy child."

"That room," resumed Frederic, "contains the portraits in oil of your grandfather and your mother. The one in the prime of life, the other a gay blooming girl of fifteen. From the happy countenances of both you would never augur aught of their miserable doom."

"You must let me occupy that chamber, cousin Wildegrave. If I may judge by my present prospects, I am likely to inherit the same evil destiny."

"These things sometimes run in families. It is the 'visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children, until the third and fourth generation,'" said Frederic, pulling up his horse at the front gate. "The mantle of the Wildegrave, Anthony, has not alone descended upon you."

On the steps of the house they were welcomed by a very fair interesting-looking girl of sixteen; but so fragile and childlike that she scarcely seemed to have entered upon her teens. She

blushed deeply as she received the stranger and her brother.

"Anthony, permit me to introduce you to another cousin. This is my sister Clarissa."

"You did not inform me that you had a sister. This is indeed an unexpected and happy surprise," said Anthony, shaking hands with the young lady.

"I thought it best to introduce all my pets together," returned Wildegrave, patting his sister's meek head. "Clary is a shy timid little creature, very unlike your sparkling Juliet, with whom I happen to be personally acquainted; but she is a dear good girl, and the darling of her brother's heart. Her orphan state seems to press painfully upon her young mind. She seldom smiles, and I can never induce her to go into company. But we must try and break her of these monastic habits, for she is not so young as she looks, and by this time she should know her position in society."

"I do not love the world, nor the world's ways, Frederic," said his sister, gravely. "It

contains but one happy spot, my own dear tranquil home, and I love it so well, that I never wish to leave it."

"But you must not expect to live at home for ever, Clary," said her brother, as he took his place at the tea-table. "Suppose I was to take it into my head to marry, what would you do then? Perhaps you would not love my wife so well as you do me!"

"It is time to prepare for that when she comes," said Clary. "I think I shall live along with you, dear Fred, as long as I require an earthly home."

Something like a sad smile passed over the pensive face of the fair child, for a child she still was, in stature and simplicity.

"And so you shall, my darling. I have no idea of bringing home a new mistress to Millbank; and long may you live to enjoy your birds, and lambs, and dogs, and cats, and all the numerous pets that you have taken upon yourself to adopt and cherish."

"Ah! Fred, that reminds me of a pair of lovely

Barbary doves I got to-day from some unknown friend. They came from London by the coach, in a pretty green cage, with no note or message; but simply directed to 'Miss Wildegrave.' I must bring them to show you; they are such loves."

Away ran Clary, to fetch her new pets. Frederic looked after her, and laughed. "I sent for the doves, Anthony, as a little surprise. How delighted she is. She is a fragile creature, Cousin Hurdlestone; and I much fear that she will not require my care long. My mother died in giving her birth; and, since the death of my sister Lucy, who was a mother to Clary, the child has drooped sadly. She was always consumptive, and during the last two months I can perceive a great change in her for the worse."

"I do not wonder at your anxiety. Oh, that I had such a sister to love!"

"Love! she was made to love. So gentle, affectionate, and confiding. It would break my heart to lose her."



"You must not anticipate evil. And, after all, Cousin Wildegrave, is death such a dreadful evil to a fair young creature, too good and amiable to struggle with the ills of life? If I were in her place, I think I could exclaim, 'That it was a good and blessed thing to die.'"

"You are right," whispered the sweet low voice of Clarissa Wildegrave. "Death is our best friend. I see, Mr. Hurdlestone, that you and I are related—that we shall love each other, for we think alike."

This would have been a strange speech, could it have been taken in any other sense than the one in which it was meant; and Anthony, as he took the dove, the emblem of purity from the fair hand of Clary, thought that a beautiful harmony existed between the bird and her mistress.

"I am sure we shall love each other, Miss Wildegrave. Will you accept me as a second brother?"

"I don't want two brothers, Mr. Hurdlestone. I love Frederic so well that I never mean for him to have a rival. No; you shall remain my

cousin. Cousins often love as well as sisters and brothers."

"And sometimes a great deal better," said Frederic, laughing. "But since you have made up your mind to love Anthony, sit down and give us another cup of tea."

"There is some one below-stairs, Mr. Anthony, who loves you at any rate," continued Clary, after handing the gentlemen their replenished cups. "One who is quite impatient to see you,—who is never tired of talking about you, and calls you her dear boy, and says that she never loved any of her own sons better than you."

"Ruth! is she here? Let me see her directly," said Anthony, rising from the table.

"Sit down, Mr. Hurdlestone. I will ring the bell for her. She can speak to you here."

In a few minutes, a plainly-dressed middle-aged woman entered the room.

"My dear foster-mother! Is this you?" said Anthony, springing to meet her.

"Why yees, Muster Anthony," said the honest creature, flinging her arms round his neck, and

imprinting on either cheek a kiss that rang through the room ; while she laughed and cried in the same breath. " The Lord love you ! How you bees grown. Is this here fine young gentleman the poor half-starved little chap that used to come begging to Ruth Candler for a sup o' milk and a morsel o' bread ? Well, yer bees a man now, and able to shift for yoursel, whiles I be a poor old woman, half killed by poverty and hard work. When you come in for your great fortin, don't forget old Ruth."

" Indeed I will not, my good mother ; if ever that day arrives I shall know how to reward my old friends. But you make a strange mistake, Ruth, when you call yourself old. You look as young as ever. And how are all my old play-fellows ?"

" Some dead ; some in service ; and my eldest gal, Mr. Anthony, is married to a Methody parson,—only think, my Sally, the wife of a Methody parson."

" She was a good girl."

" Oh, about as good as the rest on us. And,

pray, how do old Shock come along? Is the old dog dead?"

"Of old age, Ruth. He got so fat and sleek in my uncle's house, you never would have know the poor starved brute."

"In truth, you were a poverty pair—jist a bag o' bones the twain o' ye. I wonder the old Squire worn't ashamed to see you walk the earth. An' they do tell me, Measter Anthony, that he be just as stingy as ever."

"Age seldom improves avarice."

"Why nothing gets the better for being older, but strong beer. An' that sometimes gets a little sourish with keeping."

Anthony took the hint. "Ah, I remember. Your husband was very fond of ale—particularly in harvest-time. You must give him this, to drink my health." And he slipped a guinea into her hand. "And to-morrow, when I come over the hill, I shall expect him to hallo largess."

"The Lord love you, for a dear handsome young gentleman. An' my Dick will do that with the greatest of pleasure." And, with an

awkward attempt at a curtesy, the good woman withdrew.

After chatting some little time with Frederic and Clary, Anthony retired to the room appropriated to his use.

The quiet unobtrusive kindness of his young relatives had done much to soothe and tranquillise his mind; and he almost wished, as he paced to and fro the narrow limits of his airy little chamber, that he could forget that he had ever known and loved the beautiful and fascinating Juliet Whitmore.

"Why should mere beauty possess such an influence over the capricious wandering heart of man?" he thought; "yet it is not beauty alone that makes me prefer Juliet to the rest of her sex. Her talents, her deep enthusiasm, captivate me more than her handsome face and graceful form. Oh, Juliet! Juliet! why did we ever meet? or is Godfrey destined to enact the same tragedy that ruined my uncle's peace, and consigned my mother to an early grave?"

As these thoughts passed rapidly through his

mind, his eyes rested upon his mother's picture. It was the first time that he had ever beheld her but in dreams. Radiant in all its girlish beauty, the angelic face smiled down upon him with life-like fidelity. The rose that decked her dark floating locks, less vividly bright than the glowing cheeks and lips of happy youth; the large black eyes, "half languor and half fire,"—that had wept tears of unmitigated anguish over his forlorn infancy—rested upon his own, as if they were conscious of his presence. Anthony continued to gaze upon the portrait till the blinding tears hid it from his sight.

"Oh, my mother!" he exclaimed, "better had it been for thee to have died in the bloom of youth and innocence, than to have fallen the victim of an insidious—villain," he would have added; but that villain was his father; and he paused without giving utterance to the word, shocked at himself that his heart had dared to frame the impious word his conscience forbade him to speak.

What a host of melancholy thoughts crowded

into his mind while looking on that picture. The grief and degradation of his early days; his dependent situation while with his uncle; the unkind taunts of his ungenerous cousin; his blighted affections and dreary prospects for the future. How bitterly did he ponder over these!

What had he to encourage hope, or give him strength to combat with the ills that beset him on every side? Homeless and friendless, he thought, like Clary, that death would be most welcome; and sinking upon his knees, he prayed long and fervently for strength to bear with manly fortitude the sorrows which from his infant years had been his bitter portion.

Who ever sought counsel of God in vain? An answer of peace was given to his prayers. "Endure thou unto the end, and I will give thee a crown of life." He rose from his knees, and felt that all was right; that his present trials were awarded to him in mercy; that had all things gone on smoother with him, like Godfrey, he might have yielded himself up to sinful pleasures,

or followed in the footsteps of his father, and bartered his eternal happiness for gold.

"This world is not our rest. Then why should I wish to pitch my tent on this side of Jordan, and overlook all the blessings of the promised land? Let me rather rejoice in tribulations, if through them I may obtain the salvation of God."

That night Anthony enjoyed a calm refreshing sleep. He dreamed of his mother, dreamed that he saw her in glory, that he heard her speak words of comfort to his soul; and he awoke with the rising sun to pour out his heart in thankfulness to Him, who had bestowed upon him the magnificent boon of life.

The beauty of the morning tempted him to take a stroll in the fields before breakfast. In the parlour he had left his hat and cane. On entering the room to obtain them, he found Clary already up and reading by the open window. "Good morning, gentle coz," and he playfully lifted one of the glossy curls that hid her fair face from his view. "What are you studying?"



"For eternity," said Clarissa, in a sweet solemn tone, as she raised to his face her mild serious eyes.

"'Tis an awful thought."

"Yes. But one full of joy. This is the grave, Cousin Anthony. This world to which we cling, this sepulchre in which we bury our best hopes, this world of death. That which you call death, is but the gate of life; the dark entrance to the land of love and sunbeams."

What a holy fire flashed from her meek eyes as she spoke! What deep enthusiasm pervaded that still fair face! Could this inspired creature be his child-like simple little cousin? Anthony continued to gaze upon her with astonishment, and when the voice ceased, he longed to hear her speak again.

"Tell me, Clary, what power has conquered in your young heart the fear of death?"

"Truth!—simple truth. That mighty pillar that upholds the throne of God. I sought the truth. I loved the truth, and the truth has made me free. Death! from a child I never feared death."

"I remember, Anthony, when I was a very little girl, so young that it is the very first thing that memory can recal, I was sick, and sitting upon the ground at my dear sister Lucy's feet. My head was thrown back upon her lap, and it ached sadly. She patted my curls, and leaning forward, kissed my hot brow, and told me, 'That if I were a good girl, when I died, I should go to heaven.' Eagerly I asked her—What was death, and where was heaven?

"Death, she told me, was the end of life here, and the beginning of a new life that could never end in a better world. That heaven was a glorious place, the residence of the great God, who made me and the whole world. But no pain or sorrow was ever felt in that blissful place. That all the children of God were good and happy.

"I wept for joy when she told me all this. I forgot my pain. I longed to die and go to heaven; and from that hour death became to me a great anticipation of future enjoyment. It mingled in all my thoughts. It came to me in dreams, and it always wore a beautiful aspect.

“There was a clear deep pond in our garden at Harford, surrounded with green banks, covered with flowers, and overhung with willows. I used to sit upon that bank and weave garlands of the sweet buds and tender willow shoots, and build castles about that future world. The image of the heavens lay within the waters, and the trees and flowers looked more beautiful reflected in their depths. Ah, I used to think, one plunge into that lovely mirror, and I should reach that happy world,—should know all. But this I said in my simplicity, for I knew not at that tender age that self-destruction was a sin; that man was forbidden to uncloset a gate of which the Almighty held the key. His merciful hand was stretched over the creature of his will, and I never made the rash attempt.

“As I grew older, I saw three loved and lovely sisters perish one by one. Each, in turn, had been a mother to me, and I loved them with my whole heart. Their sickness was sorrowful, and I often wept bitterly over their bodily sufferings. But when the conqueror came, how easily the

feeble conquered. Instead of fearing the destroyer, as you call Death, they went forth to meet him with songs of joy, and welcomed him as a friend.

“Oh, had you seen my Lucy die! Had you seen the glory that rested upon her pale brow; had you heard the music that burst from her sweet lips ere they were hushed for ever; had you seen the hand that pointed upwards to the skies, you would have exclaimed with her,— ‘O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory!’ ”

The child paused, for her utterance was choked with tears. Anthony took her hand; he started, for pale as it was, it burnt with an unnatural heat. Fever was in every vein. “Are you ill, Clary?”

“Ill? Oh, no! but I never feel very well. I have had my summons, Anthony; I shall not be long here.”

Seeing him look anxiously in her face she smiled, and going to a corner of the room, brought forward a harp which had escaped his observation, and said playfully, “I have made

you sad, cousin, when I wished to cheer you. Come, I will sing to you. Fred tells me that I sing well. If you love music as I do, it will soon banish sorrow from your heart."

There was something so refreshing in the candour of the young creature, that it operated upon the mind of Anthony like a spell, and when the finest voice he ever in his life heard burst upon his ear, and filled the room with living harmony, he almost fancied he could see the halo encircling the lofty brows of the fair young saint:—

The flowers of earth are fair  
As the hopes we fondly cherish;  
But the canker-worm of care  
Bids the best and brightest perish.  
The heavens to-day are bright,  
But the morn brings storm and sorrow;  
And the friends we love to-night  
May sleep in earth to-morrow.

Spirit, unfold thy drooping wing;  
Up, up, to thy kindred skies.  
Life is a sad and weary thing;  
He only lives who dies.  
His the immortal fruits that grow  
By life's eternal river,  
Where the shining waves in their onward flow  
Sing Glory to God for ever.

These lines were sung to a wild irregular air,  
but one full of pathos and beauty.

“You must give me that hymn, Clary.”

“It is gone, and the music with it. I shall  
never be able to remember it again. But I will  
play you another which will please you better,  
though the words are not mine.” And turning  
again to the harp, she sang in a low plaintive  
strain, unlike her former triumphant burst of  
song:—

Slowly, slowly tolls the bell,  
A heavy note of sorrow;  
But gaily will its blithe notes swell  
The bridal peal to-morrow,  
To-morrow!

The dead man in his shroud to-night  
No hope from earth can borrow;  
The bride within her tresses bright  
Shall wreathe the rose to-morrow,  
To-morrow!

The drops that gem that lowly bier,  
Though shed in mortal sorrow,  
Will not recal a single tear  
In festal halls to-morrow,  
To-morrow!

'Tis thus through life, from joy and grief,  
Alternate shades we borrow ;  
To-night in tears we find relief,  
In smiles of joy to-morrow,  
To-morrow !

“ What divine music ! ”

“ And the words, Cousin Anthony,—you say nothing about the words.”

“ Are both your own ? ”

“ Oh, no ; I am only in heart a poet. I lack the power to give utterance to—

‘ The thoughts that breathe and words that burn.’

They were written by a friend—a friend, whom, next to Fred, I love better than the whole world, —Juliet Whitmore.”

“ And do *you* know Juliet ? ”

“ I will tell you all about it,” said Clary, leaving her harp, and sitting down beside him. “ After dear Lucy died, I was very, very ill, and Fred took me to the sea-side for the benefit of bathing. I was a poor, pale, wasted, woe-begone thing. We lodged next door to the house occupied by Captain Whitmore, who was spending the summer upon the coast with his family.

“He picked acquaintance with me upon the beach one day; and whenever nurse took me down to bathe, he would pat my cheek, and tell me to bring home a red rose to mix with the lily in my face. I told him, laughingly, ‘That roses never grew by the sea shore,’ and he told me to come with him to his lodgings and see. And then he introduced me to Juliet, and we grew great friends, for though she was much taller and more womanly, she was only one year older than me. And we used to walk, and talk a great deal to each other, all the time we remained at — , which was about three months; and, though we have not met since Fred bought Millbank, and came to this part of the country, she often writes to me sweet letters, full of poetry,—such poetry as she knows will please me; and in one of her letters, Cousin Anthony, she wrote a good deal about you.”

“About me!—Oh, tell me, Clary, what she said about me.”

“She said,” replied the child, blushing very deeply, and speaking so low that Anthony could



only just catch the words, "that she loved you. That you were the only man she had ever seen that realised her dreams of what man ought to be. And what she said of you made me love you too, and I felt proud that you were my cousin."

"Dear amiable Clary," and the delighted Anthony unconsciously covered the delicate white hand held within his own with passionate kisses.

"You must not take me for Juliet," and Clary quietly withdrew her hand. "But I am so glad that you love her, because we shall be able to talk about her. I have a small portfolio she gave me, full of pretty poems, which I will give to you, for I know all the poems by heart."

Anthony no longer heard her. He was wrapt up in a blissful dream, from which he was in no hurry to awaken. Many voices spake to his soul, but over all, he heard one soft deep voice, whose tones pierced its utmost recesses, and infused new life and hope into his breast, which said—"Juliet loves you."

## CHAPTER V.

She hath forsaken God and trusted man,  
And the dark curse by man inherited  
Hath fallen upon her.—S. M.

WE must now return to Godfrey Hurdlestone, and we find him comfortably settled in the hospitable mansion of Captain Whitmore, a great favourite with his host, a still greater favourite with Aunt Dorothy, and an object of increasing interest and sympathy to the fair Juliet.

Had she forgotten Anthony? Oh, no. She still loved him, but dared not whisper to her own heart the forbidden fact. Did she believe him guilty? Not exactly. But the whole affair was involved in mystery, and she had not confidence enough in her own judgment to overrule the prejudices of others. She could not pronounce

him innocent, and she strove to banish his image, as a matter of necessity—a sacrifice that duty demanded of her—from her mind.

Could she receive with pleasure the attentions of such a man as Godfrey Hurdlestone? She did, for he was so like Anthony, that there were times when she could almost have fancied them one and the same. He wanted the deep feeling—the tenderness—the delicacy of her absent lover, but he had wit, beauty, and vivacity, an imposing manner, and that easy assurance which to most women is more attractive than modest merit.

Juliet did not love Godfrey, but his conversation amused her, and helped to divert her mind from brooding over unpleasant thoughts. She received him with kindness, for his situation claimed her sympathy, and she did all in her power to reconcile him to the change which had taken place in his circumstances. Godfrey was not insensible to the difference in her manner, when addressing him, to what it had been formerly, and he attributed that to a growing attachment which was but the result of pity. Without

giving him the least encouragement to entertain hopes she never meant to realise, Juliet, with all the romance of her nature, had formed the happy scheme of being able to convert the young infidel from the paths of doubt and error, and animate him with an earnest zeal to obtain a better heritage than the one he had lost.

Young enthusiasts are fond of making proselytes, and Juliet was not aware that she was treading upon dangerous ground, with a very subtle companion. Untouched by the sacred truths she sought to impress upon his mind, and which indeed were very distasteful to him, Godfrey, in order to insinuate himself into the good graces of his fair instructress, seemingly lent a willing ear to her admonitions, and pretended to be deeply sensible of their importance.

Since he had arrived at an age to think for himself, he had rejected the bible, and never troubled himself to peruse its pages. Juliet proposed that they should read it together, and an hour every afternoon was chosen for that purpose. Godfrey, in order to lengthen these interviews,

started objections at every line, in his apparent anxiety to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.

With all the zeal of a youthful and self-elected teacher, Juliet found a peculiar pleasure in trying to clear up the disputed point; in removing his doubts and strengthening his faith; and, when at length he artfully seemed to yield to her arguments, the glow that brightened her cheeks, and proclaimed the innocent joy of her heart, gave to her lovely countenance a thousand additional charms.

One evening their lecture had been protracted to an unusual length; and Juliet concluded from the silence of her pupil, that he was at last convinced of the truth of her arguments. She closed the sacred volume, and awaited her companion's answer, but he remained buried in profound thought.

"Mr. Godfrey, do you still believe in the non-existence of a Deity?"

"Forgive me, Juliet, if my thoughts had strayed from heaven to earth. I will, however, tell you the purport of them. If all men are equal in the

sight of the Creator, why does not the same feeling pervade the breast of his creatures ? ”

“ Because men are not endowed with the wisdom of God, neither can they judge righteously, as he judges. That all men are equal in his sight, the text we have just read sufficiently proves : ‘ The rich and poor meet together. The Lord is the maker of them all. ’ ”

“ Then why is wealth an object of adoration to the crowd, whilst poverty, even in those who once possessed great riches, is regarded with contempt and pity ? ”

“ The world gives a value to things which in themselves are of no importance,” said Juliet. “ I think, however, that I should scorn myself, could I regard with indifference the friends I once loved, because they had been deprived of their worldly advantages.”

“ You make me proud of my poverty, Miss Whitmore. It has rendered me rich in your sympathy.”

“ Obtain your wealth from a higher source, Mr. Hurdlestone,” said Juliet, not, perhaps,

displeased with the compliment, "and you will learn to regard with indifference the riches of the world."

"But supposing, my dear friend, for argument's sake, that you had a lover to whom you were fondly attached, and he was suddenly deprived of the fortune which had placed you on an equality, would this circumstance alter your regard for him?"

"Certainly not."

"And, in spite of these disadvantages, you would become his wife?"

"That would depend on circumstances. I might be under the guidance of parents, who, from prudential motives, might forbid so rash a step; and it would be no act of friendship to the man I loved, to increase his difficulties by attempting to share them."

"And in such a case would you not act upon the decision of your own heart?"

"I dare not. The heart, blinded by its affections for the object of its love, might err in its decision, and involve both parties in ruin."

"But you could not call this love?"

"Yes, Mr. Hurdlestone, and far more deserving of the name than the sickly sentiment that so often wears the guise of real affection."

"This girl is too much of a philosopher. I shall never be able to win her to my purpose," said Godfrey, as Juliet quitted the room.

A few days after this conversation, Godfrey proposed taking a ride on horseback with Miss Whitmore.

Juliet was fond of this exercise, in which she greatly excelled. This evening she did not wish to go, but was overruled by her father and Aunt Dorothy. The evening was warm and cloudy, and Juliet often looked upwards and prophesied a storm.

"It will not come on before night," said her companion. "I remember Anthony and I, when boys, were overtaken on this very spot by a tremendous tempest." It was the first time he had suffered the name of his cousin to pass his lips in the presence of Juliet. It brought the colour into her cheeks, and in a timid voice



she inquired if he knew what had become of Anthony?

"He had a second cousin, it seems, a Mr. Wildegrave, who is residing in his father's parish; Anthony has found a temporary home with him."

Why did Juliet turn so pale? Did the recollection of the fair amiable girl she had met and loved at —— trouble her? She spoke no more during their long ride. On their way home, they entered a dark avenue, that led to the Lodge, and passed through Norgood Park.

"I hate this road," said Godfrey. "I have never travelled it since the old place passed into the hands of strangers."

"It was thoughtless in me to propose this path, Mr. Godfrey; let us return by the road."

She checked her horse as she spoke, when her attention was aroused by a female figure, seated in a dejected attitude beneath an old oak tree. Her hair hung wildly about her shoulders; and her head was buried between her knees.

Godfrey instantly recognised the person; and looking up at the heavy dark clouds, which had

for some time been encroaching upon the rich saffron hues in the west, he said, hastily turning his horse, "You are right, Miss Whitmore, we are going to have a storm, and you have chosen a dangerous path. Let us get from under these trees as fast as we can."

"Stay a few minutes. I want to speak to this poor woman."

"It is only some gipsy girl who has been sleeping under the tree. See, it begins to rain. Do you not hear the large drops pattering upon the leaves? If you do not put your horse on, you will get very wet."

"I am not afraid of a few drops of rain. The person seems in distress—I must speak to her."

At this moment the girl slowly rose from her seat, and revealed the faded attenuated features of Mary Mathews.

"Mary!" exclaimed Juliet, shocked and astonished at the recognition; "what are you doing here? The rain is falling fast. Had you not better go home?"

"Home!" said the girl gloomily. "I have no

home. The wide world is my home, and 'tis a bad place for the motherless and moneyless to live in. My father is dead; Mr. —— seized our things yesterday for the rent, and turned us out into the streets; my brother is gone to Ashton to look for employment, and I thought this place was as good as another; I can sit here and brood over my wrongs."

Juliet was inexpressibly shocked. She turned to address a remark to her companion, but to her increasing surprise, he was no longer in sight. A vague suspicion flashed upon her mind. She was determined to satisfy her doubts. Turning again to the girl, she addressed her in a kind soothing tone.

"Have you no friends, Mary, who can receive you until your brother is able to provide for you?"

"I never had many friends, Miss Juliet, and I have lost those I once had. You see how it is with me," she cried, rising and wringing her hands. "No respectable person would now receive me into their house. There is the work-

house, to be sure. But I will die here, beneath the broad ceiling of heaven, before its accursed walls shall shut me in."

Juliet's heart prompted her to offer the wretched girl an asylum ; but she dreaded the indignation of her fastidious aunt. Whilst she paused, irresolute how to act, the girl, emboldened by despair, suddenly caught hold of her bridle, and fixing her dim eyes upon her face, continued :—

"It is to you, Miss Juliet, that I owe all this grief and misery—yes, to you. Had you been a poor girl, like myself, I need not have cared for you. My face is as pretty as yours, my figure as good. I am as capable of love, and of being loved ; but I lack the gold, the fine clothing, and the learning, that makes you my superior. People say, that you are going to marry Mr. Hurdlestone ; and it is useless for a poor girl like me to oppose the wishes of a grand lady like you. But I warn you not to do it. He is my husband in the sight of God ; and the thought of his marrying you has broken my heart. Despair is strong ; and when I saw you together just

now, I felt that I should like to murder you both !”

“Mary,” said Juliet, gravely, “you should not give ear to such reports—they are utterly false. Do you imagine that any young woman of principle would marry such a man as Mr. Hurdlestone ?”

“Then why are you constantly together ?” returned Mary, with flashing eyes. “Did he not ride away the moment he saw me ?”

“You have mistaken one Mr. Hurdlestone for the other. The gentleman that just left me was Mr. Godfrey.”

“And is it not Mr. Godfrey I mean ? Good kind Mr. Anthony would not harm a lamb, much less a poor motherless girl like me !”

Again wringing her hands, she burst into a fit of passionate weeping. Juliet was dreadfully agitated ; and springing from her horse, she sat down upon the bank beside the unfortunate young woman, regardless of the loud roaring of the thunder, and the heavy pouring of the rain, and elicited from her the story of her wrongs.

Indignant at the base manner in which she had been deceived by Godfrey Hurdlestone, Juliet bade Mary follow her to the Lodge, and inform her aunt of the particulars that she had just related to her.

"I never will betray the man I love!" cried Mary, passionately. "When I told you my secret, Miss Whitmore, it was under the idea that you loved him—that you meant to tear him from me. Tell no one, I beseech you, the sad story, which you wrung from me in my despair!"

She would have flung herself at Juliet's feet; but the latter drew back, and said, with a sternness quite foreign to her nature :

"Would you have me guilty of a base fraud, and suffer the innocent to bear the brand of infamy, which another had incurred? Affection cannot justify crime. The feelings with which you regard a villain like Godfrey Hurdlestone are not deserving of the name of love."

"Ah, you young ladies are so hard-hearted," said Mary, bitterly. "Pride hinders you from

falling into temptation, like other folk. If you dared, you would be no better than one of us."

"Mary, do not change my pity for your unhappy situation into contempt. Religion and propriety of conduct can protect the poorest girl from the commission of crime. I am sorry for you, and will do all in my power to save you from your present misery. But you must promise me to give up your evil course of life."

"You may spare yourself the trouble," said the girl, regarding her companion's beautiful countenance, and its expression of purity and moral excellence, with a glance of envious disdain. "I ask no aid; I need no sympathy; and, least of all, from you, who have robbed me of my lover, and then reproach me with the evil which your selfish love of admiration has brought upon me."

A glow of anger passed over Miss Whitmore's face, as the girl turned to leave her. She struggled a few minutes with her feelings, until her better nature prevailed; and following Mary, she caught her by the arm:

"Stay with me, Mary! I forgive the rash words you uttered. I am sure you cannot mean what you say."

"You had better leave me," said the girl, gloomily. "Evil thoughts are rising in my heart against you, and I cannot resist them."

"You surely would not do me any harm?" and Juliet involuntarily glanced towards her horse, which was quietly grazing a few paces off—"particularly when I feel most anxious to serve you."

The girl's countenance betrayed the most violent agitation. She turned upon Juliet her fine eyes, in which the light of incipient madness gleamed, and said, in a low, horrid voice :

"I hate you. I should like to kill you!"

Juliet felt, that to run from her, or to offer the least resistance, would be the means of drawing upon herself the doom which her companion threatened. Seating herself upon a fallen tree, and calmly folding her hands together, she merely uttered,—“Mary, may God forgive you for your sinful thoughts!” and then awaited in



silence the issue of this extraordinary and painful scene.

The girl stood before her, regarding her with a fixed and sullen stare. Sometimes she raised her hand in a menacing attitude; and then, again, the sweet mild glance of her intended victim appeared to awe her into submission.

"Shall I kill her?" she muttered, aloud. "Shall I spoil that baby face, which he prefers to mine?" Then, as if that thought aroused all the worst feelings in her breast, she continued in a louder, harsher tone: "Yes—I will tread her beneath my feet—I will trample her into dust: for he loves her. Oh, misery, misery! he loves her better than me—than me, who loves him so well—who could die for him! Oh, agony of agonies! for her sake, I am forgotten and despised!"

The heart of the woman was touched by the vehemence of her own passions. Her former ferocity gave way, and she sank down upon the ground, and buried her face in the long grass, and wept.

Her agonising sobs and groans were more than Juliet could listen to, without offering a word of comfort to the mourner. Forgetful of her former fears, she sat down by the prostrate weeper, and lifting her head upon her knees, put back from her swollen face the long-neglected tresses, which, drenched by the heavy rain, fell in thick masses over her convulsed features. Mary no longer offered any resistance. Her eyes were closed, her lips apart. She lay quite motionless, but ever and anon the pale lips quivered; and streams of tears gushed from beneath the long lashes that shrouded her eyes, and fell like rain over her garments.

Oh, love and guilt, how dreadful is your struggle in the human heart! Like Satan, after his first transgression, the divine principle, although degraded from its former excellence, still retains somewhat of its sovereign power and dignity, and appears little less

“Than archangel ruined.”

“Poor Mary!” sighed Juliet, “your sin has

indeed found you out ! Thank heaven, the man I love is not guilty of this moral murder. Oh, Anthony, how have I injured you ! I ought to have known that you were utterly incapable of a crime like this ! ”

“ Leave me, Miss Juliet,” said Mary, regaining her self-possession ; “ leave me to my own sorrow. Oh, I wish I could die, and forget it all ! But I dare not die. Hateful as life has become, I dare not look upon death. Do not weep for me—your tears will drive me mad ! Do not look at me so—it makes me hate you. Do not ask me to go to the Lodge, for I will not go ! ” she cried, springing to her feet, and clenching her hands. “ I am my own mistress ! You cannot force me to obey you. If I choose to bid defiance to the world, and live as I please, it is no business of yours. You shall not—you dare not attempt to control me ! ” And brushing past Miss Whitmore, she was soon lost among the trees. Juliet drew a freer breath when she was gone, and turning round, beheld her father.

“ What are you doing here in the rain,

Juliet? your habit is soaked with water. And where is Godfrey?"

"Take me home, papa!" said Juliet, flinging herself into his arms, and sobbing upon his shoulder. "Godfrey is gone for ever. I have been dreadfully frightened; but I will tell you all when we get home. I cannot tell you here!"

contained a good substantial oak dining-table, a dozen well-polished elm chairs, an old-fashioned varnished clock, and a huge painted cupboard in a corner, the doors of which were left purposely open, in order to display Dame Strawberry's store of "real chany" cups and saucers, four long-necked cut-glass decanters, and a dozen long-legged ale-glasses. Then there was a side-table decorated with a monstrous tea-board, in which was pourtrayed, in all the colours of the rainbow, the queen of Sheba's memorable visit to the immortal wisdomship of Solomon.

Various pictures made gay the white-washed walls, amidst which shone conspicuously the history of the prodigal son, representing in six different stages a panoramic view of his life, in all of which the hero figured in the character of a fop in the reign of the first George, dressed in a sky-blue coat, scarlet waistcoat, knee-breeches, silk stockings, and high-heeled shoes, and to crown all, a full-bottomed wig. Then there were the four Seasons, quaintly represented by four damsels, who all stared upon you with round

eyes, and flushed red faces, dame Winter forming the only exception, whose grey locks and outstretched hands seemed to reproach her jolly companions for their want of sympathy in her sufferings.

Over the mantel-shelf hung a looking-glass in a carved frame, darkened and polished by the rubbing of years, quite a relic of the past, the top of which was ornamented by a large fan of peacock's feathers, and bunches of the pretty scentless flowers called "Love everlasting." A couple of guns slung to the beams that crossed the ceiling; an old cutlass in its iron scabbard, and a very suspicious-looking pair of horse pistols, completed the equipment of the room. The lean-to contained a pantry and wash-house, and places for stowing away game and liquor.

The private room was infinitely better furnished than the one just described. It boasted the luxury of a carpeted floor, and a dozen of painted cane-bottomed chairs, several mahogany card-tables, and a good mirror.

In this room a tall drooping girl was busily

employed in wiping the dust from the furniture, and placing the cards and dice upon the tables. Sometimes she stopped and sighed heavily, or looked upwards and pressed her hand upon her head, with a sad and hopeless glance; ever and anon wiping away the tears that trickled down her pale cheeks with the corner of her checked apron.

The door was suddenly flung open with a sound that made the girl start, and the broad person of Mrs. Strawberry filled up the opening.

"Mary Mathews!" she shouted at the top of her voice, "what are you dawdling about? Do you think that I can afford to pay gals a shilling a week to do nothing? Just tramp to the kitchen and wash them potatoes for the men's supper. I don't want no fine ladies here, not I, I'se can tell you! If your brother warn't a good customer it is not another hour that I'd keep you, you useless lazy slut!"

"I was busy putting the room to rights, ma'am," said Mary, her indignation only suffered to escape her in the wild proud flash of her eye. "I can't be in two places at once!"

"You must learn to be in three or four, if I please," again bawled the domestic Hecate. "Your time is mine; I have bought it, and I'll take good care not to be cheated out of what's my due. Light up them candles. Quick! I hear the men whistling to their dogs. They'll be here directly."

Away waddled the human biped, and Mary, with another heavy sigh, lighted the candles, and retreated into the bar-room.

The night was cold and damp, although it was but the first week in October. The men were gathered about the fire, to dry their clothes and warm themselves. The foremost of these was Godfrey Hurdlestone. "Polly!" he shouted. "Polly Mathews, bring me a glass of brandy, and mind you don't take toll by the way."

The men laughed. "A little would do the girl good, and raise her spirits," said old Strawberry. "Never mind him, my dear. He's a stingy one. Take a good sup. Brandy's good for every thing. It's good for the head-ache, and the tooth-ache, and the heart-ache. That's



right, take it kindly. It has put a little blood into your pale face already."

"I wish it would put a little into her heart," said Godfrey: "she 's grown confoundedly dull of late."

"Why, Master Godfrey, who's fault is that, I should like to know?" said the old poacher. "You drink all the wine out of the cask, and then kick and abuse it, because 'tis empty. Now, before that girl came across you, she was as high-spirited a tom-boy as ever I seed. She'd come here at the dead o' night to fetch home here old dad, when she thought he'd been here long enough, and she'd a song and a jest for us all. She could take her own part then, and not one of my fellows dared to say a crooked word to her. I thought that she was the last girl in the world to be brought to sich a pass."

"Hush," said Godfrey; "what's the use of ripping up old grievances? Here comes Mathews with the game!"

"A poor night's work," said that ruffian, flinging down a sack upon the floor. "Five hares,

three brace of pheasants, and one partridge. It was not worth venturing a trip across the herring pond for such a paltry prize. Here, Poll! stow them away in the old place. In two hours they'll be upon their journey to Lunnon without the aid of wings. Mind, girl, and keep a good look-out for the mail."

"Tim will take them to the four cross ways," said Mrs. Strawberry. "I want Mary at home. Why, boys, you have hardly earned your supper."

"If it's ready, let us have it upon trust, mother," said Godfrey: "this cold work in the plantations makes a fellow hungry."

In a moment all was bustle and confusion: the clatter of plates, and the clashing of knives and forks, mingled with blasphemous oaths and horrid jests, as the *worthy* crew sat down to partake of their evening meal. Over all might be heard the shrill harsh voice of Mistress Strawberry, scolding, screaming, and ordering about in all directions.

The noisy banquet was soon ended; and some of the principals, like Godfrey and his associate

Mathews, retired to the inner room, to spend the rest of the night in gambling and drinking. Mary was, as usual, in attendance to supply their empty glasses, and to procure fresh cards, if required.

"I don't think I shall play to-night, Mathews," said Godfrey, drawing his companion aside. "I lost all I was worth yesterday; and Skinner is not here. He's the only one worth plucking; the rest are all minus of cash just now."

"By the way, Godfrey," said Mathews, "what do you mean to do about that three hundred pounds you owe to Drew? You would buy the cattle. They were not worth half the money you paid for them; but you were drunk, and would have your own way. You must return the horses at a great loss."

"That's out of my power. They are gone—lost in a bet last night to that lucky fool, Skinner."

"Whew! you are a precious fellow. I am glad that I was not born under the same star. Why, Drew insists upon being paid, and threatens to take legal steps against you."

"I have provided for that," said Godfrey. "Look here." They stepped to the table at the far end of the room, and young Hurdlestone drew from his pocket-book a paper which he gave to Mathews. "Will that pass?"

"What is this? An order for three hundred pounds upon the bank of —, drawn by the Jew, Haman Levi. What eloquence did you employ to obtain such a prize?"

"It's forged," said Godfrey, drawing close up to him, and whispering the words in his ear. "Did ever counterfeit come so close to reality?"

"Why, 'tis his own hand."

"Do you think it will escape detection?"

"Old Scratch himself could hardly find it out. You may get the blunt as soon as you like; and, if this succeeds, my boy, you will soon be able to replenish our empty purses." And Mathews rubbed his hands together, and chuckled with delight.

"Have you heard anything of Anthony?" said Godfrey. "Is he still with young Wildegrave?"

"I saw him this morning in the lane, by the old yew grove, near the park. He was walking

very lovingly with a pretty little girl. I wonder what there is in him to make the girls so fond of him. I raised my hat as he passed, and gave him the time of day, and hang me, if he did not start, as if he had seen his father."

"Are they reconciled?"

"Not a bit of it. Wildegrave's man told me that he never goes near the Hall. Between ourselves, Mr. Godfrey, this proves your cousin to be a shrewd clever fellow. The only way to get those stingy old chaps to leave their money to their lawful heirs is by taking no notice of them."

"Oh that this Anthony were out of my path!" said Godfrey, lowering his voice to a whisper. "We could soon settle the old man's business."

"The lad's a good lad," said the other. "I don't much relish the idea of having his blood to answer for. If we could but get the father and son into an open quarrel, which would place him in suspicious circumstances—do you understand me?—and then do the old man's business—the blame might fall upon him instead of upon you."

"I would certainly rather transfer the hemp collar to his neck, if it could be safely accomplished. But how can it be brought about?"

"The devil will help us at a pinch. I have scarcely turned it over in my mind. But I'm sure your heart would fail you, Godfrey, if it came to murder."

"Do you take *me* for a coward?"

"Not exactly. I was making some allowance for natural affection."

"Pshaw!" muttered his companion. "Only give me the chance. Affection! What affection do I owe to father or son? Anthony robbed me of my father's heart, and now stands between me and my uncle's fortune."

"I owe Anthony something on my own account, if it were only for the contempt with which he treated me in the presence of Miss Whitmore. By-the-by, Mr. Godfrey, are all your hopes in that quarter at an end?"

"Oh, hang her! Don't name her, Mathews. I would rather have Mary without a farthing than be domineered over by that pretty prude,

and her hideous old aunt. I believe I might have the old maid for the asking—ha ! ha ! ha !”

“ Mr. Godfrey,” said Mathews, taking no notice of his mistimed mirth, “ I would advise you, as a friend, not to mention our designs on the old miser to Mary.”

“ She won’t peach.”

“ I’d not trust her. Women are strange creatures. They will often do the most wicked things when their own interests and passions are concerned ; and, at other times, will sacrifice their best friends, from a foolish qualm of conscience, or out of a mistaken feeling of benevolence. If you wish our scheme to be successful, don’t let Mary into the secret.”

A wild laugh sounded in his ears : both started ; and, on turning round, beheld Mary standing quietly beside them. Mathews surveyed his sister with a stern searching glance. She smiled contemptuously ; but drew back, as if she feared him.

“ Did you overhear our conversation, Mary ? ”

“ I can keep my own secrets,” said the girl,

sullenly. "I don't want to be burthened with yours. They are not worth the trouble of keeping. My sleep is bad enough already. A knowledge of your deeds, William, would not make it sounder."

"It would make you sleep so soundly, that evil thoughts would not be likely to keep you awake," said her brother, clenching his fist in her face. "Betray but one syllable of what you have overheard, and your bed is prepared for you."

"I do not care how soon," said Mary; "if you hold out such a temptation, I don't know what I might be tempted to do. They say that the sins of the murdered are all visited upon the murderer. What a comfort it would be to transfer mine to you." This was said in a tone of bitter irony; and, however unwilling to betray himself, it seemed to produce a strange effect upon the mind of the ruffian.

"Who talks of murder?" he said. "You are dreaming. Go to your bed, Mary. It is late; and don't forget to say your prayers."



"Prayers!" said the girl, with a mocking laugh. "The prayers of the wicked never come up before the throne of God. My prayers would sound in my own ears like blasphemy. How would they sound in the ears of God?"

"Don't talk in that way, Mary; you make my flesh creep," said Mathews. "I have never said a prayer since I was a boy at my mother's knee, and that was before Mary was born. Had mother lived, I should not have been what I now am; and poor Mary—" He paused; there was a touch of human tenderness in the ruffian's tone and manner. The remembrance of that mother's love seemed the only holy thing that had ever been impressed upon his mind; and, even sunk as he was in guilt, and hardened in crime, had he followed its suggestions, it would have led him back to God, and made him the protector, instead of the base vendor, of his sister's honour.

"What is the use of dwelling upon the past?" said Godfrey, pettishly. "We were all very good little boys once. At least, my father always

told me so; and by the strange contradictions which abound in human nature, I suppose that that was the very reason which made me grow up a bad man. And bad men we both are, Mathews, in the world's acceptance, and we may as well make the most we can out of our acquired reputation."

"Now I would like to know," said Mathews, gloomily, "if you have ever felt a qualm of conscience in your life?"

"I do not believe in a future state. Let that answer you."

"Do you never fear the dark?" returned Mathews, glancing stealthily around. "Never feel that eyes are looking upon you—cold, glassy eyes, that peer into your very soul—eyes which are not of this world, and which no other eyes can see? Snuff the candles, Mary. The room looks as dismal as a vault."

Godfrey burst into a loud laugh. "If I were troubled with such ocular demonstrations, I would wear spectacles. By Jove! Bill Mathews, waking or sleeping, I never was haunted by an

evil spirit worse than yourself. But here's Skinner at last! Fetch a bottle of brandy and some glasses to yon empty table, Mary. I must try to win back from him what I lost last night."

## CHAPTER VII.

Oh! speak to me of her I love,  
And I shall think I hear  
The voice whose melting tones, above  
All music, charm mine ear.—S. M.

WHILST Godfrey Hurdlestone was rapidly traversing the broad road that leads down to the gates of death, Anthony was regaining his peace of mind in the quiet abode of domestic love. Day after day the young cousins whiled away the charmed hours in delightful converse. They wandered hand in hand through green quiet lanes, and along sunny paths, talking of the beloved. Clary felt no jealous envy mar the harmony of her dove-like soul, as she listened to Anthony's rapturous details of the hours he had spent with Juliet, his poetical descriptions of her lovely countenance and easy figure. Nay, she

often pointed out graces which he had omitted, and repeated, with her musical voice, sweet strains of song by her young friend to him unknown.

Was there no danger in this intercourse? Clarissa Wildegrave felt none. In her young heart's simplicity, she dreamed not of the subtle essence which unites kindred spirits. She never asked herself why she loved to find the calm noble-looking youth for ever at her side ; why she prized the flowers he gathered, and loved the songs he loved ; why the sound of his approaching steps sent the quick blood glowing to her pallid cheek, and lighted up those thoughtful dreamy eyes with a brilliancy which fell with the serene lustre of moon or star-light upon the heart of her cousin—to him as holy and as pure.

She loved to talk of Juliet, for it brought Anthony nearer. She loved to praise her, for it called up a smile upon his melancholy face ; the expression of his brow became less stern, and his glance met hers, full of grateful tenderness. She loved to see her own girlish face reflected in the dark depths of those beautiful eyes, nor knew that

the mysterious fire they kindled in her breast was destined to consume her young heart, and make it the sepulchre of her new-born affections.

"It must be a blessed thing to be loved as you love Juliet, Anthony," she said, as they were sitting together beneath the shadow of the great oak which graced the centre of the lawn in front of the house. "Could you not share your heart with another?"

"Why, my little Clary, what would you do with half a heart?" said Anthony, smiling; for he always looked upon his fragile companion as a child. "Love is a selfish fellow,—he claims the whole,—concentrates all in himself, or scatters abroad."

"You are right, Anthony. I am sure if I had the half, I should soon covet the whole. It would be a dangerous possession, and stand between me and heaven. No, no, it would not be right to ask that which belongs to another; only it seems so natural to wish those to love us whom we love."

"I do love you, sweet Clary, and you must continue to love me; though it is an affection

quite different from that which I feel for Juliet. You are the sister whom nature denied me—the dear friend whom I sought in vain amidst the world and its heartless scenes; my good angel, whose pure and holy influence subdues the evil passions of my nature, and renders virtue more attractive. I love you, Clary. I feel a better and humbler creature in your presence; and when you are absent, your gentle admonitions stimulate me to further exertions.”

“I am satisfied, dear Anthony,” said Clary, lifting her inspired countenance, and gazing steadily upon him. “As yon heavens exceed in height and glory the earth beneath, so far, in my estimation, does the love you bear to me exceed that which you feel for Juliet. One is of the earth, and like the earth must perish; the other is light from heaven. Evermore let me dwell in this light.”

With an involuntary movement, Anthony pressed the small white hand he held in his own to his lips. Was there the leaven of earth in that kiss, that it brought the rosy glow into the cheek

of Clary, and then paled it to death-like whiteness? "Clary," he said, "have you forgotten the promise you made me a few days ago?"

Clary looked up inquiringly.

"To show me Juliet's portfolio."

"Oh, yes, and there are some lines about love, that I will sing and play to you," said Clary, rising.

"Have you got the music?"

"It is all here," said the fair girl, placing her hand upon her breast. "The heart is the fountain from which all my inspiration flows." And she bounded off to fetch her harp and the portfolio.

Anthony looked after her, but no regretful sigh rose to his lips. His heart was true to the first impression to which love had set his seal; its affections had been consecrated at another shrine, and he felt that his dear little cousin could never stand in a tenderer relation to him.

Clary returned quite in a flutter with the exertion she had used. Anthony sprang forward to relieve her of the harp, and to place it in a convenient situation.



"Juliet had a great fear of being married for her money," said Clary. "I used to laugh at her, and tell her that no one who knew her would ever remember her money; the treasures of her mind so far surpassed the dross of the world. Yet, for all that, she wrote and gave me this ballad the next morning. I felt very much inclined to scold her for her want of faith."

"Do let me hear it."

"Patience, Mr. Anthony. You must give me time to tune my harp. Such a theme as love requires all the strings to sound in perfect unison. There now,—let me think a few minutes. The air must be neither very sad, nor yet gay. Something touching and tender. I have it now—"

#### THE MAIDEN'S DREAM.

In all the guise that beauty wears,  
Well known by many a fabled token,  
Last night I saw young Love in tears,  
With stringless bow and arrows broken.  
Oh, waving light in wanton flow,  
Fair sunny locks his brows adorn,  
And on his cheeks the roseate glow  
With which Aurora decks the morn.

The living light in those blind eyes  
 No mortal tongue could ere disclose ;  
 Their hue was stol'n from brighter skies,  
 Their tears were dew-drops on the rose.  
 Around his limbs of heav'nly mould  
 A rainbow-tinted vest was flung,  
 Revealing through each lucid fold  
 The faultless form by poets sung.

He sigh'd ; the air with fragrance breathed ;  
 He moved ; the earth confess'd the god :  
 Her brightest chaplets nature wreath'd  
 Where'er his dimpled feet had press'd the sod.  
 "Why weeps Love's young divinity alone,  
 While men have hearts, and woman charms beneath ;  
 Tell me, fair worshipp'd boy of ages flown,  
 Is ev'ry flowret faded in Love's wreath ?"

With that he raised his dewy azure eyes,  
 And from his lips soft words of music broke ;  
 But still the truant tears would crowding rise,  
 And snowy bosom heave before he spoke.  
 "Oh, come and weep with me," he cried, "fair maid ;  
 Weep, that the gentle reign of Love is o'er ;  
 Come, venture nearer—cease to be afraid,  
 For I have hearts and worshippers no more.

"In vain I give to woman's lovely form  
 All that can rapture on the heart bestow ;  
 The fairest form no dastard heart can warm  
 While gold has greater power than Love below.  
 In vain I breathe a freshness on her cheek ;  
 In vain the graces round her footsteps move,  
 And eyes of melting beauty softly speak  
 The soul-born silent eloquence of Love.

"It was not thus," the urchin, sighing, said,  
"When hope and gladness crown'd the new-born earth,  
In Eden's bowers, beneath a myrtle's shade,  
Before man was, Love sprang to birth.  
While Heaven around me balmy fragrance shed,  
With rosy chains the infant year I bound ;  
And as my bride young Nature blushing led  
In vestal beauty o'er the verdant ground.

"The first fond sigh that young Love stole  
Was wafted o'er those fields of air,  
To kindle light in man's stern soul,  
And render Heaven's best work more fair.  
Creation felt that tender sigh,  
And earth received Love's rapturous tears,  
Their beauty beam'd in woman's eye,  
And music broke on human ears.

"Whether I moved upon the rolling seas,  
Or sank on Nature's flowery lap to rest,  
Or raised my light wings on the sportive breeze,  
The conscious earth with joy her god confess'd.  
While Mirth and Gladness round my footsteps play'd,  
And bright-hair'd Hope led on the laughing hours,  
As man and beast in holy union stray'd  
To share the lucid streams and virgin flowers.

"Ah, useless then yon shafts and broken bow,  
Till man abused the balm in mercy given ;  
Whilst gold has greater charms than Love below,  
I flee from earth to find a home in heaven !"  
A sudden glory round his figure spread,  
It rose upon the sun's departing beam ;  
With the sad vision sleep together fled,  
Starting, I woke—and found it but a dream !

"When I try to compose music for love songs," said Clary, suddenly turning to Anthony, whom she found buried in profound thought, "I never succeed. If you understood this glorious science of music, and could make the harp echo the inborn melodies that float through the mind, you would not fail to give them the proper effect."

"Why do you think that I should be more fortunate than your sweet self, Clary?"

"Because you 'love one bright, particular star,' with your whole heart, Anthony. The heart has a language of its own. It speaks in music. There are few that can comprehend its exquisite tones; but those who are so gifted are the best qualified to call them forth. Love must have existed before music. The first sigh he breathed gave birth to melodious sounds. The first words he spake were song; so Juliet tells us, in this little poem, and surely she is inspired."

"What else have we here?" said Anthony, peeping into the portfolio and drawing out a sheet of paper. "Is this bold energetic-looking hand my beautiful Juliet's autograph?"

"You are disappointed, cousin Anthony. You expected to find an elegant flowing hand, as fair and graceful as the white fingers that held the pen. Now, be it known unto you, my wise cousin, that persons of genius, especially those who deal in rhymes, rarely write fine hands; their thoughts flow too rapidly to allow them the necessary time and care required to form perfect characters. Most boarding-school misses write neat and graceful hands, but few of such persons are able to compose a truly elegant sentence. The author thinks his ideas of more consequence than his autograph, which is but the mechanical process he employs to represent them on paper."

"What sort of a hand do you write, Clary?"

"Why, cousin Anthony, it just hangs between the two extremes. Not good enough to deserve much praise, nor bad enough to call forth much censure. In this respect it corresponds more with my character than Juliet's does."

"You are no judge of your mental qualifications, Clary, and I am not going to make you vain by

enumeration. Can you compose music for this little ballad?" and he placed one before her.

"That? Oh, no, I can do nothing with that. But hark! I hear my brother calling me from the house. Let us go to him." She ran forward, and Anthony was about to follow her, when he was addressed in a rude familiar manner, and turning round, he beheld the burly form of William Mathews, leaning over the slight green paling that separated the lawn from the road.

"Good day to you, Mr. Anthony. You have been hiding from us of late. A pleasant place this."

"Have you any business with me, Mr. Mathews?" said Anthony, in a voice, and with a look, which rendered his meaning unmistakeable.

"Ahem! Not exactly. But 'tis natural for one to inquire after the health of an old neighbour. Are you living here, or with the old 'un?"

"Good morning, Mr. Mathews," said Anthony, turning coldly upon his heel. "I make a point of never answering impertinent questions."

"Curse you for a proud fool," muttered the ruffian, as Anthony entered the house. "If Bill

Mathews does not soon pull you down from your high horse, may his limbs rot in a jail." And calling to an ugly black cur, that was prowling round the garden, and whose physiognomy greatly resembled his own, the poacher slunk off.

"Anthony," said Frederic Wildegrave, as his cousin, in no very gentle mood, entered the house, "unexpected business calls me away for some weeks to a distant county. You must make yourself as comfortable as you can during my absence. Clary will do the honours of the house. By the by, I have just received four hundred pounds for the sale of the big marsh. I have not time to deposit the money in the bank; but will you see to it some time during the week. There is the key of my desk. You will find the money and the banker's book in the second drawer. And now, Clary, don't look so grave, but give me a kiss, and wish me back."

"I don't think that you will have any," said Clary, flinging her arms round his neck. "My heart fills with gloom at the thought of your going away—and so suddenly."

"I shall come back as soon as I possibly can.  
What! in tears. Silly child!"

"Don't go, dear Fred!"

"Nonsense! Business must not be neglected."

"Something tells me that this journey is not  
for good."

"Dear Clary, I could quarrel with you for these  
superstitious fears. Farewell, my own darling—  
and joy be with you."

Kissing again and again the tears from  
Clarissa's cheek, and shaking Anthony warmly by  
the hand, the young master of the mansion sprang  
to his saddle and was gone, leaving Anthony and  
Clary to amuse themselves in the best manner  
they could.

"You must not forget, Anthony, that Fred has  
left you his banker. He is so generous that the  
money will be safer in your hands than in his own."

Anthony laughed, and put the key of the desk  
into his pocket. What to him was the money?  
had it been four thousand, or forty thousand, he  
would not, in all probability, have given it a  
second thought.



The next morning Clary was seriously indisposed, and her cousin took his breakfast alone. After making many anxious inquiries about her, and being assured by old Ruth that she only required rest to be quite well again, he retired to Frederic's study; and taking up a volume of a new work that was just out, he was soon buried in its contents.

A loud altercation in the passage, between some person who insisted upon seeing Mr. Hurdlestone and old Ruth, broke in upon his studies.

"Will you please to send up your name, sir?" said Ruth, in no very gentle tones; "Mr. Hurdlestone is busy."

"No. I told you before that I would announce myself."

Anthony instantly recognised the voice, and before he could lay aside the book, Godfrey Hurdlestone stood before him.

How changed—how dreadfully changed he was, since they last met. The wicked career of a few months had stamped and furrowed his brow with the lines of years. His dress was mean and faded.

He looked dirty and slovenly, and little of his former manly beauty and elegance of person remained. So utterly degraded was his appearance that a cry of surprise broke from Anthony's lips, so inexpressibly shocked was he at an alteration so startling.

"I suppose you know me, Anthony," said Godfrey, with a sarcastic smile; "I can't be so changed as all that?"

"You are greatly changed."

"For the worse, of course. Yes, poverty soon brings a man down who has never been used to work. It has brought me down—down to the very dust."

"I am sorry to hear you say so. I thought that you were comfortably settled with the Whitmores until you could procure a tutorship. With your education and abilities, Godfrey, you should not appear thus."

"I left the Whitmores a long time ago. I thought you had heard that piece of ill news, for such stories travel apace. You must know that, as ill-luck would have it, Juliet learned from Mary

necessity of the case, and, by offering large interest for the loan of the money, have obtained it. What was to be done? Confounded and bewildered, he could think of no plan at all likely to succeed.

Alas, for Anthony! The money which had been left in his hands by Frederic Wildegrave, at that unlucky moment, flashed across his mind. It was exactly the sum. He was sure that Frederic would lend it to him, at his earnest request. Anthony was young, and inexperienced, he had yet to learn that we are not called upon, in such matters, to think for others, or to do evil that good may come of it. He looked doubtfully in the haggard face of the wretched suppliant.

"Have you no means of raising the money, Godfrey?"

"Yes—in a few days, perhaps. But it will be too late then."

"Cannot you persuade the Jew to wait?"

"He is inexorable. But, Anthony, if you can borrow the money for me to-day, I will repay it to-morrow night."

"Can you promise me this?"

"I swear it. I will sell the reversion of the legacy left me by my Aunt Maitland, which falls due at her husband's death. It is eight hundred pounds: I will sell it for half its value, to meet the demand. But to accomplish this, more time is required than I can just now command. Will this satisfy you?"

"It will. But woe to us both, if you deceive me!"

"Can you imagine me such an ungrateful scoundrel?"

"You have betrayed me once before. If you fail this time, Godfrey, you will not die alone."

Anthony went to the desk, and unlocked it with a trembling hand. As he opened the drawer which contained the money, a sudden chill crept through his veins, and he paused, irresolute how to act. "It is not theft," he argued to himself; "it is but a loan, which will soon be repaid. A few hours cannot make much difference. Long before Frederic requires the money, it will be replaced."

He had gone too far to recede. Godfrey was already at his side, and eagerly seized the golden prize. With tears of real or feigned gratitude he left the house, and Anthony had leisure to reflect upon what he had done.

The more he pondered over the rash act, the more imprudent and criminal it appeared; and when, by the next post, he received a letter from Frederic, informing him that he had made a very advantageous purchase of land, and requested him to transmit the money he had left in his keeping, his misery was complete.

"Unfortunate Anthony!" he cried. "Into what new dangers will your unhappy destiny hurry you!"

Snatching up his hat, he rushed forth in quest of his unprincipled relative.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Strange voices still are ringing in mine ears,  
Something of shame, of anguish, and reproach ;  
My brain is dark, I have forgot it all.—S. M.

IN the miserable attic over the kitchen in the public-house already described, there was a sound of deep, half-suppressed, passionate weeping—a young mother weeping for her first-born, who would not be pacified. The deepest fountain of love in the human heart had been stirred ; its hallowed sources abused, and violently broken up ; and the shock had been too great for the injured possessor to bear patiently. Her very reason had yielded to the blow, and she lamented her loss, as a froward child laments the loss of some favourite plaything. Had she not been a creature of passionate impulses, the death of this babe of shame would have brought a stern joy to her bereaved mind.

She would have wept—for nature speaks from the heart in tears; but she would have blessed God that He had removed the innocent cause of her distress from being a partaker of her guilt,—a sharer of her infamy,—a lasting source of regret and sorrow.

Mary Mathews had looked forward with intense desire for the birth of this child. It would be something for her to love and cling to—something for whose sake she would be content to live—for whom she could work and toil; who would meet her with smiles, and feel its dependence upon her exertions. She thought, too, that Godfrey would love her once more, for his infant's sake. Rash girl! She had yet to learn that the love of man never returns to the forsaken object of his selfish gratification.

The night before this event took place, violent words had arisen between Mary and her brother. The ruffian was partially intoxicated, and urged on by the infuriated spirit of intemperance, regardless of the entreaties of the woman Strawberry, or the helpless situation of the unfortunate

girl, he had struck her repeatedly; and the violent passion into which his brutal unkindness had hurried his victim produced premature confinement, followed by the death of her child, a fine little boy.

Godfrey was absent when all this occurred; and though the day was pretty far advanced, he had not as yet returned.

As to William Mathews, he wished that death had removed both mother and child, as he found Mary too untractable to be of any use to him.

"My child! my child!" sobbed Mary. "What have you done with him? where have you put him? Oh! for the love of Heaven, Mrs. Strawberry, let me look at my child!"

"Hold your peace, you foolish young creature! What do you want with the corp? You had better lie still, and be quiet, or we may chance to bury you both in the same grave."

"Oh!" sighed the girl, burying her face in the pillow, and giving way to a fresh gush of tears, "that's too good to happen. The wretched



never die; the lost, like me, are never found. The wicked are denied the rest, the deep rest of the grave. Oh, my child! my blessed child! Let me but look upon my own flesh and blood,—let me baptise the unbaptised with my tears,—and I shall feel this horrible load removed from my heart.”

“It was a sad thing that it died, before it got the sign of the cross,” said the godless old woman. “Sich babes, I’ve heard the priest say, never see the light o’ God’s countenance; but the blackness of darkness abides on them for ever. Howsomever, these kind o’ childer never come to no good, whether they live or die. Young giddy creatures should think o’ that, before they run into sin, and bring upon themselves trouble and confusion. I was exposed to great temptations in my day; but I never disgraced myself by the like o’ that.”

“Oh, you were very good, I dare say,” said Mary, coaxingly; “and I will think you the best and kindest woman that ever lived, if you will but let me see the poor babe.”

“What good will it do you to see it? it will only make you fret. You ought to thank God that it is gone. It was a mercy you had no right to expect. You are now just as good as ever you were. You can go into a gentleman’s service, and hold up your head with the best of them. I would not stay here, if I were you, to be kicked and ordered about by that wicked brother of yours, nor wait, like a slave, upon this Mr. Godfrey. What is he now? not a bit better than one of us. Not a shilling has he to bless himself with; and I am sure he does not care one farthing for you, and will be glad that the child is off his hands.”

“Oh, he loves me; indeed, indeed, he loves me and the child. Oh, he will grieve for the child. Mrs. Strawberry, if ever you were a mother yourself, have pity upon me, and show me the baby.”

She caught the woman by the hand, and looked up in her face with such an expression of longing intense desire, that, harsh as she was, it melted her stony heart; and, going to a closet, she returned with the babe in her arms. It was

dressed in its little cap, and long white night-gown—a cold image of purity and perfect peace.

“Oh, mine own! mine own!” wailed the young mother, pressing the cold form against her breast, as she rocked to and fro on her pillow. “My blessed innocent boy! You have left me for ever, and ever, and ever. My child! my infant love! I have wept for you—prayed for you—while yet unborn, have blessed you. Your smiles would have healed up the deep wounds of my broken heart. Together we would have wandered to some distant land, where reproaches, and curses, and blows, would never have found us; and we would have been happy in each other’s love—so happy! Ah, my murdered child! I call upon you, but you cannot hear me! I weep for you, but you are unconscious of my grief. Ah, woe is me! What shall I do, a-wanting thee? My heart is empty; the world is empty. Its promises are false—its love departed. My child is dead, and I am alone—alone—alone.”

"Come, give me the babe, Mary! I hear your brother's step upon the stair."

"You shall not have it!" cried the girl, starting up in the bed, her eyes flashing fire. "Hush! your loud voice will waken him. He is mine. God gave him to me; and you shall not tear him from me. No other hand shall feed and rock him to sleep but mine."

"Lullaby, baby! no danger shall come,  
My breast is thy pillow, my heart is thy home;  
That poor heart may break, but it ever shall be  
True, true to thy father, dear baby, and thee!"

"Weep, mother, weep, thy loved infant is sleeping  
A sleep which no storms of the world can awaken;  
Ah, what avails all thy passionate weeping,  
The depths of that love which no sorrow has shaken?"

"All useless and lost in my desolate sadness,  
No sunbeam of hope scatters light through the gloom;  
Instead of the voice of rejoicing and gladness,  
I hear the wind wave the rank grass on thy tomb."

Partly moaning, and partly singing, the poor creature, exhausted by a night of severe pain, and still greater mental anxiety, dropped off into a broken slumber, with the dead infant closely pressed to her bosom.

“Well, there they lie together: the dead and the living,” said Mrs. Strawberry. “’Tis a piteous sight. I wish they were both bound to the one place. We’ll have no good of this love-sick girl; and I have some fears myself of her brutal brother and the father of the brat. I hear his voice: they are home. Well, they may just step up, and look at their work. If this is not murder, I wonder what is?”

With a feeling of more humanity than Mrs. Strawberry was ever known to display, she arranged the coarse pillow that supported Mary’s head, and, softly closing the door, descended the step-ladder that led to the kitchen: here she found Godfrey and Mathews in close conversation, the latter laughing immoderately.

“And he took the bait so easily, Godfrey? Never suspected that it was all a sham? Ha! ha! ha! Let me look at the money. I can scarcely believe my own senses. Ha! ha! ha! Why, man, you have found out a more expeditious method of making gold than your miserly uncle ever knew.”

"Aye, but I have not his method of keeping it, Bill; but you may well laugh. This proud boy is in toils now. I have him as sure as fate. I must say that I felt a slight pang of remorse, when I saw him willing to dare so much for me; and he looked so like my father, that I could almost have fancied that the dead looked through his eyes into my soul. I have gone too far to recede. What must be, must be; none of us shape our own destinies, or some good angel would have warned Anthony of his danger."

"What the devil has become of Mary?" said Mathews, glancing round the kitchen. "She and I had some words last night; it was a foolish piece of business; but she provoked me past endurance. I found her dressed up very smart just at nightfall, and about to leave the house. I asked her where she was going so late in the evening. She answered, 'To hear the ranters preach in the village; that she wanted to know what they had to say to her soul.' So I cursed her soul, and bade her go back to her chamber, and not expose her shame to the world; and she

grew fierce, and she asked me, tauntingly, who it was that had brought her to that shame, and if I were not the greater sinner of the two; and I struck her in my anger, and drove her upstairs."

"Struck her!" said Godfrey, starting back. "Struck a woman! That woman your sister, and in her helpless situation. You dared not do such a cowardly unmanly act?"

"I was drunk," said Mathews, gloomily; "and she was so aggravating, that I am not sure that you would have kept your hands off her. She flew at me like an enraged tiger-cat, with clenched fists and eyes flashing fire, and returned me what I gave with interest; and I believe there would have been murder between us, if Mrs. Strawberry had not dragged her off. What has become of her, mother. How is she now?"

"You had better go up and see," said the woman, with a bitter laugh. "She is not very likely to fight again to-day."

There was something mysterious in the woman's manner that startled the ruffian. "Come up with me, Godfrey, and speak to her.

One word from you will make my peace with Mary. I did not mean to hurt the girl."

Mary had been sleeping. The sound of their steps broke in upon her feverish slumber; but she still kept her eyes closed, as if unwilling to rouse herself from the stupor of grief in which she had fallen.

"She is sleeping," said Mathews, approaching the bed. "By Jove! I thought she was dead. How still she lies. How deadly pale she looks—and what is that upon her breast?"

"A child! my child!" cried Godfrey, stepping eagerly forward. "Poor Mary! she is safe through that trial. But the child—"

"Is dead," said Mathews. "Yes, dead. Godfrey, you are in luck. What a fortunate thing for us all."

"Dead!" said the young father, laying his hand upon the cold pale cheek of his first-born. "Aye, so it is. She was so healthy; I dared not hope for this. Poor little pale cold thing, how happy I am to see you thus! What a load of anxiety your death has removed from



my heart! What a blessing it would have been, if it had pleased God to take them both!"

This from the man she loved—the father of her child—was too much. Mary opened her large tear-swollen eyes, and fixed them mournfully upon his face. He stooped down, and would have kissed her; but she drew back, with ill-disguised horror. The love she had so madly cherished for him was gone—vanished for ever in those cruel words, and nought but the blank darkness and horror of remorse remained. She turned upon her pillow, and, fixing her eyes upon her dead infant, mentally swore that she would live for revenge. She no longer shed a tear, or uttered the least complaint, but secretly blessed God that the babe was dead. She had lived to hear the father of that child, for whose sake she had borne the contempt of her neighbours, the reproaches of conscience, and the fears of eternal punishment, rejoice in the death of his first-born; and, without a tear or sigh, wish that she might share the same grave. Could such things be?

Alas! they happen every day, and are the sure reward of guilt.

"My poor Mary," said the hypocrite. "You have suffered a good deal for my sake; but do not cry. God knew best when he took the child from us. It is painful for us to part with him, but depend upon it, he is much better off where he is."

"I know it now," said the young mother. "Yes, Godfrey Hurdlestone, he is better off where he is; and, for some wise end, God has spared my worthless life. Is that you, William? The murderer of my child has no business here."

"Mary, it was the drink. I did not mean to hurt either you or the child; so shake hands, and say that you forgive me."

He leant over the bed, and held out his hand. Mary put it contemptuously aside. "Never," she said firmly. "Neither in this world, nor in the world to come."

"Do you know what you say?" said Mathews, bending over the pillow, and doubling his fist in his sister's face, whilst his dark grey eyes emitted a deadly light.

"I am in my senses," returned Mary, with a bitter laugh, "although you have done your best to drive me mad. You need not stamp your foot, nor frown, nor glare upon me, like a beast of prey. I defy your malice. What I said I will again repeat; and may my curse, and the curse of an offended God, cleave to you for ever!"

"I will murder you for those words!" said the fiend, grinding his teeth.

"Death is no punishment. Threaten me, William, with something that I fear. I am helpless, now, but I shall soon be strong and well, and my arm may be a match for the feeble drunkard—the cowardly destroyer of women and children."

"Unhand me, Godfrey Hurdlestone!" roared out the villain, struggling in the powerful grasp of his colleague in guilt. "For by all the fiends of hell! she shall answer for those words!"

"Hold, Mathews! You are mad! I will stab you to the heart, if you attempt to touch her."

He spoke to the winds, for throwing him back to the wall, Mathews seized the knife from his

hand, and sprang upon his intended victim. Rising slowly up in the bed, with an air of calm and solemn grandeur, she held up the pure pale form of the dead child between herself and the murderer."

Not a word was spoken. With an awful curse the man reeled back as if he had been stung by a serpent, and fell writhing upon the floor, and Mary sunk back upon her pillow, and covered her face with her hands, muttering as she did so,—“How strong is innocence! The wicked are like the chaff which the wind scatters abroad. Oh, God, forgive the past, which is no longer in my power; and let the future be spent in thy service. I repent in dust and ashes. Oh, woe is me, for I have sinned.”

Rousing Mathews from the fit into which he had fallen, and in no very enviable state of mind, Godfrey left the chamber, and joined a set of notorious gamblers in the room below.

From this scene of riot and drunken debauchery, he was summoned by Mrs. Strawberry, to attend a gentleman who wished to speak to him

in the outer room. With unsteady steps, and a face flushed with the eager excitement of gambling, Godfrey followed his conductress, and ruffian as he was, his cheek paled, and his eyes sought the ground when he found himself in the presence of his injured cousin.

Shocked at the situation in which he found him, Anthony briefly stated the difficulty he had had in tracing Godfrey to this infamous resort, and the awkward circumstances in which he was placed with young Wildegrave; and he claimed the promise made to him by his cousin on the preceding day, to relieve him from the impending danger.

"I told you that to-night, Anthony, the money should be repaid. The clock has not yet struck for eight. If I have luck, it shall be returned before twelve to-night."

"Luck!" reiterated Anthony, gasping for breath, as he staggered to the wall for support. "Is it on such a precarious basis that my honour and your honesty must rest? You talked yesterday of the sale of your reversionary property."

"I did. But the Jew was too cunning for me. He became the purchaser, and the money just satisfied his demand, and covered an old debt of honour, that I had forgotten was due to him, and I am worse off than I was before."

"But you can restore the money you got from me last night, as Haman was satisfied by the sale of the legacy."

"I could if you had called two hours ago. I was tempted to try my luck in the hope of gaining a few pounds for myself, and"—

"It is lost at the gaming table?"

Godfrey nodded his head.

"It is well," said Anthony, bitterly. "You have saved your own life by transferring the doom to me."

He did not wait for further explanation, but walked rapidly from the house; and after a thousand severe self-upbraidings, in a fit of despair, took the road that led through Ashton Park to the miser's dwelling.

After an hour's walk he came in sight of the wretched hovel. It was now evening, and a faint

light, shed from a solitary rush candle, gleamed through the broken apertures of the low casement. He paused upon the threshold of this abode of want and misery, and for the first time in his life he thought that it had been well for him had he never left it. For some time he continued knocking loudly at the door, without being able to gain admittance; at length, bolt after bolt was slowly withdrawn, and the miser himself let him in.

"It is well, Grenard, that you are home at last," growled forth the surly old man. "If you make a practice of staying out so late at night, we shall both be murdered."

But when, on holding up the light, he discovered his mistake, and recognised the features of his son, he demanded in an angry tone,—  
"What business he had with him?"

Anthony pushed past him, and entered the house.

"Father, I will tell you immediately—but I am tired and ill. I must sit down."

Without regarding the old man's stern look

of surprise and displeasure, he advanced to the table, and sat down upon the empty bench which was generally occupied by Grenard Pike, secretly rejoicing that that worthy was not at home. The awkwardness and difficulty of his situation pressed so painfully upon the young man, that for a few seconds he could not utter a word. A cold perspiration bedewed his limbs, and his knees trembled with agitation.

Stern and erect, the old man, still holding the light, stood before him, and though he did not raise his head to meet the miser's glance, he felt that the searching gaze from which he used to shrink when a boy was riveted upon him.

Mark Hurdlestone was the first to break the awful silence.

"Well, sir! If you are ready to explain the cause of this extraordinary visit, I am ready to listen to you. What do you want?"

"Your advice and aid," at length gasped forth the unhappy youth. "I have acted very foolishly, and in an hour of great difficulty and danger, I



fling myself upon your mercy, and I beseech you not to turn a deaf ear to my prayer."

Mark sat down in his high-backed chair, and placed the light upon the table in such a manner as fully to reveal the pale agitated features of his son. Had a stranger at that moment entered the cottage, he might for the first time have perceived the strong family likeness that existed between them. The same high features, the same compressed lips and haughty stern expression of eye. The gloom which overspread the countenance of the one, produced by the habitual absence of all joyous feeling; the other by actual despair. Yes, in that hour they looked alike, and the miser seemed tacitly to acknowledge the resemblance, for a softening expression stole over his rigid features as he continued to gaze upon his son.

"You have acted foolishly," he said; "no uncommon thing at your age—and in danger and difficulty you seek me. I suppose I ought to consider this act of condescension on your part a great compliment. Your circumstances must be desperate indeed, when they lead you

to make a confidant of your father, considering how greatly I am indebted to you for filial love. You have been in my neighbourhood, Anthony Hurdlestone, nearly a month, and this is the first visit with which you have honoured me."

"I should have been most happy to have paid my respects to you, sir, could I have imagined that my visits would have been acceptable."

"It was worth your while to make the trial, young man. It was not for you to think, but to act, and the result would have proved to you how far you were right. But to dismiss all idle excuses, which but aggravate your want of duty in my eyes, be pleased briefly to inform me, why I am honoured so late at night with a visit from Mr. Anthony Hurdlestone?"

Anthony bit his lips. It was too late to retract, and though he deeply repented having placed himself in such a humiliating situation, he faithfully related to his stern auditor the cause of his distress. The old man listened to him attentively, a sarcastic smile at times writhing his thin lip; and when Anthony implored him for the loan of

four hundred pounds, until the return of Mr. Wildegrave, who he was certain would overlook his unintentional fraud—he burst into a taunting laugh, and flatly refused to grant his request.

Anthony assailed him with a storm of eloquence, using every argument which the agony of the moment suggested, in order to soften his hard heart. He might as well have asked charity of the marble monuments of his ancestors. Stung to madness by the old man's obstinate refusal, he sprang from his seat.

“Father, relent I beseech you: revoke this cruel decision. My request is too urgent to admit of a denial!”

He dashed his clenched fist upon the shattered remains of the old oak table, upon which Mark was leaning, his head resting between his long bony attenuated hands. The blow sent a hollow sound through the empty desolate apartment. The grey-haired man raised his eyes, without lifting his head, and surveyed his son with an expression of mocking triumph, but answered not a word. His contemptuous silence was more

galling to the irritated applicant than the loudest torrent of abuse. He was prepared for that, and he turned from the stony glance and harsh face of his father with eyes full of tears, and his breast heaving under the sense of intolerable wrongs.

At length his feelings found utterance. His dark eyes flashed fire, and despair, with all her attendant furies, took possession of his heart.

"I will not reproach you, Mr. Hurdlestone, for giving me life," he cried, in tones tremulous with passion, "for that would be to insult the God who made me: but your unnatural conduct to me since the first moment I inherited that melancholy boon has made me consider that my greatest misfortune is being your son. It was in your power to have rendered it a mutual blessing. From a child, I have been a stranger in your house, an alien to your affections. While you possessed a yearly income of two hundred thousand pounds, you suffered your only son to be educated on the charity of your injured brother, your sordid love of gold rendering you indifferent to the wants of your motherless child. Destitute of

a home, without money, and driven to desperation by an act of imprudence, which my compassion for the son of that generous uncle urged me in an unguarded hour to commit, I seek you in my dire necessity to ask the loan of a small sum, to save me from utter ruin. This you refuse. I now call upon you by every feeling, both human and divine, to grant my request.

“What, silent yet. Nay, then by Heaven! I will not leave the house until you give me the money. Give me this paltry sum, and you may leave your hoarded treasures to the owls and bats, or make glad with your useless wealth some penurious wretch, as fond of gold as yourself!”

Mark Hurdlestone rocked to and fro in his chair, as if labouring with some great internal emotion; at length he half rose from his seat, and drew a key from beneath his vest. Anthony, who watched all his movements with intense interest, felt something like the glow of hope animate his breast; but these expectations were doomed to be annihilated, as the miser again

sunk down in his chair, and hastily concealed the key among the tattered remains of his garments.

"Anthony, Anthony," he said, in a hollow voice, which issued from his chest as from a sepulchre. "Cannot you wait patiently until my death? It will all be your own, then."

"It will be too late," returned the agitated young man, whilst his cheeks glowed with the crimson blush of shame, as a thousand agonising recollections crowded upon his brain, and, covering his face with his hands, he groaned aloud. A long and painful pause succeeded. At length a desperate thought flashed through his mind.

He drew nearer, and fixed his dark expanded eyes upon his father's face, until the old man cowered beneath the awful scrutiny. Again he spoke, but his voice was calm, dreadfully calm. "Father, will you grant my request? Let your answer be briefly, yes—or no?"

"No!" thundered the miser. "I will part with my life first."

"Be not rash. We are alone," returned the

son, with the same unnatural composure. "You are weak, and I am strong. If you wantonly provoke the indignation of a desperate man, what will your riches avail you?"

The miser instinctively grasped at the huge poker that graced the fireplace, in whose rusty grate a cheerful fire had not been kindled for many years. Anthony's quick eye detected the movement, and he took possession of the dangerous weapon with the same cool determined air.

"Think not, that I mean to take your life. God forbid that I should stain my hand with so foul a crime, and destroy your soul by sending it so unprepared into the presence of the Creator. It is not blood—but money I want."

"Would not a less sum satisfy you?" and the miser eyed fearfully the weapon of offence, on which his son continued to lean, and again drew forth the key.

"Not one farthing less."

Mark glanced hurriedly round the apartment, and listened with intense anxiety for the sound

of expected footsteps. The sigh of the old trees that bent over the hovel, swept occasionally by the fitful autumnal blast, alone broke the deep silence, and rendered it doubly painful.

"Where can the fellow stay?" he muttered to himself; then as if a thought suddenly struck him, he turned to his son, and addressed him in a more courteous tone. "Anthony, I cannot give you this great sum to-night. But come to me at this hour to-morrow night, and it shall be yours."

"On what surety?"

"My word."

"I dare not trust to that. You may deceive me."

"When was Mark Hurdlestone ever known to utter a lie?" and a dark red flush of anger mounted to the miser's face.

"When he forged the news of his brother's death, to murder by slow degrees my unhappy mother," said Anthony, scornfully. "The spirits of the dead are near us in this hour; silently, but truly, they bear witness against you."



The old man groaned, and sunk his face between his hands as his son continued :

"I cannot wait until the morrow. This night alone is mine. If you cannot readily lay your hands upon the money, write me an order upon your banker for the sum."

"I have neither pen, ink, nor paper," said the miser, eagerly availing himself of the most paltry subterfuge, in order to gain time until the return of Grenard Pike, or to escape paying the money.

"I can supply you." And Anthony drew forth a small writing case, and placed paper before him, and put a pen into his father's hand.

"Anthony, you had better trust to my word," said Mark, solemnly. "Gold is a heavier surety than paper, and by the God who made us, I swear to keep my promise."

"Aye, but you forget the old proverb, father. 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.'"

The old man eyed him with a glance of peculiar

meaning, as with a trembling hand he proceeded to write the order. When he had finished, he folded the paper carefully together, and presented it to his son. "You will not trust to my honour. Be it so. Take this paper, Anthony Hurdlestone, for a Hurdlestone you are, and for the first time in my life I believe that you are my son. But it is the sole inheritance you will ever receive from me. Go, and let me see your face no more."

"God bless you, sir," said the youth, in a faltering voice. "Forgive my late intemperate conduct; it was influenced by despair. From this moment I will love and respect you as my father."

The miser's thin lips quivered as his son turned to leave him. He called faintly after him,—“Anthony, Anthony! Don't leave me alone with the spirits of the dead. To-morrow I will do you justice. At this hour to-morrow.”

His son stopped, but the entrance of old Pike stifled the rising gleam of paternal regard, and dismissed the ghastly phantoms of the past

from the excited mind of the gold-worshipper. He grumbled a welcome to his minion, and sternly waved to the unwelcome intruder to quit the house. His wishes were instantly obeyed.

## CHAPTER IX.

Murder most foul hath been committed here,  
By thee committed—for thy hand is red,  
And on thy pallid brow I see impress'd  
The mark of Cain.—S. M.

A THRILLING feeling of joy at having gained the object of his visit to Oak Hall, and obtained the means of wiping off the stain he so much dreaded from his character, was throbbing in the breast of Anthony Hurdlestone, as he reached, about nine o'clock in the evening, his nominal home.

He had sold his birthright for a mere trifle, but the loss of wealth weighed lightly in his estimation against the loss of honour. On entering Frederic's study, he found his cousin Godfrey and the ruffian Mathews awaiting his return.

Godfrey had dogged his steps to Ashton, had

seen him enter the miser's hovel, and from the length of his visit guessed rightly the cause. His anxiety to know the result of this meeting induced him to return a part of the money he had the day before received from his cousin, which he had neither lost at play, as he had affirmed to Anthony, nor paid to the Jew the fictitious debt which he had declared was due to him. These falsehoods had been planned by him and his base companion, in order to draw the unsuspecting young man into their toils, and bring about the rupture they desired with his father.

"My dear Anthony," he said, shaking him heartily by the hand, as he rose to meet him. "I have not enjoyed a moment's peace since we parted this evening. Here is half the sum you so kindly advanced, and if you can wait for a few days, I hope to have the rest ready for you."

With a heavy sigh, Anthony received the notes from his cousin, and counting them over he locked them up in the desk, doubly rejoiced that he had the means of replacing the whole sum.

"You have been to Oak Hall," said Godfrey, carelessly. "How did the old place look?"

"I did not notice it. My mind was too much agitated. When I left you ruin stared me in the face; as a last desperate chance to free myself, I determined to visit my father, and request the loan of the money."

"A daring move that," said Godfrey, with a smile to his companion; "particularly after the rebuff you got from him, when you visited him on behalf of my poor father. May I ask if you were successful?"

"Here is the order for the money;" and with a feeling of natural triumph, Anthony took the order from his pocket-book.

"Is it possible! The philosopher's stone is no fable, if words of yours could extract gold from a heart of flint. Brave Anthony! you have wrought a miracle. But let me look at the order. Seeing's believing; and I cannot believe such an improbable thing without I witness it with my own eyes."

"Nay, convince yourself of the truth, Godfrey.

What object can I have in attempting to deceive you? It would be against my own interest so to do, as you are still my debtor for two hundred pounds."

Godfrey took the paper from his cousin's hand, and went to the table to examine it by the light. As he glanced over the contents he gave a sudden exclamation of surprise, and a smile curled his lip.

"Do you believe me now?" said Anthony, who knew not exactly how to interpret the dubious expression of Godfrey's face.

"Read for yourself," returned Godfrey, giving back the paper. "When you deal with such an accomplished scoundrel as Mark Hurdlestone, you should give the devil a retaining fee."

"What do you mean, Godfrey?" and his cousin eagerly snatched the paper from his grasp. "He has not dared to deceive me!"

Still, as he read, his countenance fell, a deadly paleness suddenly pervaded his features, and uttering a faint moan, in which all the bitter

disappointment he experienced was concentrated, he sunk down in a swoon at Godfrey's feet.

"What on earth's the matter with the lad?" said Mathews, as he assisted Godfrey in lifting him to the sofa. "What's in the wind?"

"A capital joke," whispered Godfrey. "I could almost love the old sinner for his caustic humour. The order for the money is drawn up in the usual manner, but instead of the words '*To pay*,' the crafty old fox has written, '*Not to pay* the bearer the sum of four hundred pounds.'"

"Excellent! But let old skinflint look to himself; with that malignant joke he has signed his own death-warrant."

Anthony by this time had recovered from his swoon. But he sat like one stupefied; his throbbing temples resting upon his hands, and his eyes fixed on vacancy. Godfrey's voice at length roused him to a recollection of what had happened, and in faint tones, he requested his two companions to leave him.

"Not in this state of mind. Come, Anthony, clear up that cloudy brow. I am sorry, sorry



that I have been the means of drawing you into this ugly scrape, but for my poor father's sake you must forgive me. If you were to make a second application to your ungracious dad, he might, in the hope of ridding himself of such an importunate beggar, give down the two hundred pounds yet wanting. Such a decrease in your demand might work wonders. What think you? Matters cannot be worse between you than they are at present."

Anthony recalled his father's parting look—his parting words.

"To-morrow, I will do you justice if you come to me, at this hour, to-morrow ;" and hope again shed a faint glimmer in his breast. He repeated these words to Godfrey. Had he noticed the glance which his cousin threw towards his partner in guilt, he would have been puzzled to read its meaning. Mathews understood it well.

"Go, by all means, Anthony. I have no doubt that his heart will relent ; that he already feels ashamed of his barbarous conduct. At all events, it can do no harm—it may do good.

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Take that infamous piece of writing in your hand, and reproach him with his treachery. My father's injured spirit will be near you, to plead your cause, and you must be successful."

"Yes, I will go," said Anthony. "Either he, or I, must yield. My mind is made up upon the subject. Godfrey, good night."

"He is ours, Mathews," whispered Godfrey, as they left the house. "The old man's days are numbered. Remember this hour to-morrow night!"

Glad to find himself once more alone, Anthony continued to pace the room, revolving over in his mind his interview with his father. He felt convinced that the old man had repented of the cruel trick he had played him; that but for the entrance of Grenard Pike, he would have recalled the paper and given him the sum he desired. At all events, he was determined to see him at the hour the miser had named, and tell him, without disguise, his thoughts upon the subject.

In the midst of all this tumult of passion,

the image of Juliet glided into his mind, and seemed to whisper peace to his perturbed spirit.

“Oh, that I had a friend to advise me in this gloomy hour, into whose faithful bosom I could pour out my whole soul! Shall I tell Clary? Shall I confide to the dear child my guilt and folly?” He rang the bell. Old Ruth, half asleep, made her appearance.

“How is your mistress, Ruth?”

“Better the night, sir.”

“Will you tell her that I wish very much to see her.”

“You won’t disturb the poor lamb, sure. Why, Mr. Anthony, she has been in her bed these two hours. She asked after you several times during the day, and was very uneasy at your absence. Poor child! I believe she is mortal fond of you.”

“Of me, Ruth?”

“Of you, sir. I am sure Miss Clary is over head and ears in love with you. Arn’t it natural? Two handsome young creatures living in the same house together, walking, and talking, and

singing and playing, all the time with each other. Why, Master Anthony, if you don't love the dear child, you must be very deceitful, after making so much of her."

The old woman left him, still muttering to herself some anathema against the deceitfulness of men; while Anthony, shocked beyond measure at the disclosure of a secret which he had never suspected, threw himself upon the sofa, and yielding to the overpowering sense of misery which oppressed him, wept—even as a woman weeps—long and bitterly.

"Why," he thought, "why am I thus continually the sport of a cruel destiny? Are the sins of my parents indeed visited upon me? Is every one that I love, or that loves me, to be involved in one common ruin?"

And then he wished for death, with a longing, intense, sinful desire, which placed him upon the very verge of self-destruction. He went to Frederic's bureau, and took out his pistols, and loaded them, then placed himself opposite to the glass, and deliberately took aim at his head.

But his hand trembled, and the ghastly expression of his face startled him—so wan, so wild, so desperate. It looked not of earth, still less like a future denizen of heaven.

“No, not to-night,” he said. “He the stern father may relent, or fill up the full measure of his iniquities. The morrow; God knoweth what it may bring for me. If all should fail me, then this shall be my friend. Yea, even in his presence will I fling at his feet the loathed life he gave!”

He threw himself upon the sofa, but not to sleep. Hour after hour passed onward towards eternity. One, two, three, spoke out the loud voice of Time, and it sounded in the ears of the watcher like his knell.

And she, the fair child—she who had, at sixteen, outlived the fear of death. Had he won her young spirit back to earth, to mar its purity with the stains of human passion? There was not a feeling in his heart at that moment so sad as this. How deeply he regretted that he ever had been admitted to that peaceful home.

But was she not a Wildegrave, and was not misery hers by right of inheritance? And then he thought of his mother—thought of his own desolate childhood—of his poor uncle—of his selfish but still dear cousin Godfrey, and overcome by these sad reflections, as the glad sun broke over the hills, bringing life and joy to the earth, he sunk into a deep dreamless sleep, from which he did not awaken until the broad shadows of evening were deepening into night.

When old Ruth dusted out the parlour, she was surprised to find him asleep upon the sofa. He looked so pale and ill, that she flung Miss Clary's large cloak over him, and went up stairs to inform her mistress of such an unusual occurrence.

All day Clary had sat beside him, holding almost unconsciously his burning hand in hers. Often she bathed his temples with sal-volatile and water, but so deep were his slumbers, so blessed was the perfect cessation from mental misery, that he continued to sleep until the sun disappeared behind the oak hills, and then, with a deep

sigh, he once more awoke to a painful consciousness of his situation.

Clary dropped the hand she held, and started from the sofa, over which she had been leaning, the vivid blush burning upon her cheek, and sprang away to order up tea. Anthony rose, marvelling at his long sleep, and went to his chamber to make his toilet; when he returned to the parlour he found Clary waiting for him.

"My kind little cousin," he said, taking her hand, "you have been ill—are you better?"

"I am quite well, and should be quite happy, dear Anthony, if I could see you looking so. But you are ill and low-spirited; I read it all in your dim eye and dejected looks. Come, sit down, and take a cup of tea. You have eaten nothing all day. Here is a nice fowl, delicately cooked, which Ruth prepared for your especial benefit. Do let me see you take something."

"I cannot eat," said Anthony, pushing the plate from him, and eagerly swallowing the cup of refreshing tea that Clary presented. "I am ill, Clary, but mine is a disease of the mind. I

am, indeed, far from happy: I wish I could tell you all the deep sorrow that lies so death-like at my heart."

"And why do you make it worse by concealment?" said Clary, rising and going round to the side of the table on which he was leaning; "you need not fear to trust me, Anthony; there is no one I love on earth so well, except dear Frederic. Will you not let your little cousin share your grief?"

"My sweet child," said Anthony, winding his arm around her slender waist, and leaning his head on her shoulder, "you could render me no assistance; the knowledge of my sorrow would only make you miserable."

"If it is anything about Juliet, tell me freely. Perhaps, you think, dear Anthony, that I am jealous of you and Juliet; oh, no, I love you too well for that. I know that I can never be as dear to you as Juliet; that she is more worthy of your love—Good Heavens! you are weeping. What have I said to cause these tears? Anthony, dear Anthony, speak to me.



You distract me. Oh, tell me that I have not offended you."

Anthony's lips moved, but no word issued from them. His eyes were firmly closed, his brow pale as marble, and large tears slid in quick succession from beneath the jet-black lashes that lay like a shadow upon his ashen cheeks. And other tears were mingling with those drops of heart-felt agony—tears of the tenderest sympathy, the most devoted love, as, leaning that fair face upon the cold brow of the unhappy youth, Clary unconsciously kissed away those waters of the heart, and pressed that wan cheek against her gentle bosom. She felt his arm tighten round her, as she stood in the embrace of the beloved, scarcely daring to breathe, for fear of breaking the sad spell that had linked them together. At length Anthony unclosed his eyes, and looked long and earnestly up in his young companion's face—

"Oh, Clary! how shall I repay this love, my poor innocent lamb? Would to God we had never met!"

"Do not say that, Anthony. I never knew what it was to be happy until I knew you."

"Then you love life better than you did, Clary?"

"I love you," sighed Clary, hiding her fair face among his ebony curls, "and the new life with which you have inspired me is very dear."

"Oh, that I could bid you cherish it for my sake, dear artless girl! But we must part. In a few hours, the faulty being, whom you have rashly dared to love, may be no longer a denizen of earth."

"What do you mean?" cried Clary, starting from his arms, and gazing upon him with a distracted air. "While I have been idling in my bed, something dreadful has happened. I read it in your averted eyes—on your sad, sad brow. Do not leave me in this state of torturing doubt. I beseech you to tell me the cause of your distress?"

"Clary, I cannot; I wish to tell you, but the circumstances are so degrading, I cannot find words to give them utterance; I feel that you

would despise me—that all good men would upbraid me as a weak unprincipled fool; yet I call Heaven to witness, that at the moment I committed the rash act I thought not that it was a crime.”

“It is impossible, Anthony, that you could do anything unworthy of yourself, or that could occasion this bitter grief. You are labouring under some strong delusion, and are torturing yourself to no purpose. Frederic will be home to-morrow; he will counsel you what to do, and all will be right.”

“Frederic home to-morrow!” and Anthony gasped for breath.

“Oh, I am so glad. It seems an age since he left us. By the bye, I have a letter for you, which I quite forgot. It came this morning by the post. I am sure it is from my brother, for I know his hand.” Going to the mantel-shelf, Clary handed him the letter. Anthony trembled violently as he broke the seal. It ran thus:—

“MY DEAR ANTHONY,

“I know not in what manner to interpret your unkind silence. Your failing to forward the money I left in your hands has caused me great mortification and inconvenience, and will oblige me to leave — to-morrow, without transacting the business that took me from home.

“Though I am certain that you will give me very satisfactory reasons for your non-compliance with my very urgent request, I feel so vexed and annoyed by it, that it makes me half inclined to quarrel with you. You would forgive this if you only knew what an irritable mortal I am. I advise you and Clary to frame some notable excuse for your negligence, or you may dread the wrath of your affectionate friend,

“FREDERIC.”

This letter, though written half in joke, confirmed Anthony's worst fears. He imagined that Frederic suspected him of dishonourable conduct, although he forbore to say so in direct terms; and his repugnance to confess what he had

done, to either Clary or her brother, was greatly strengthened by the perusal.

It was this want of confidence in friends who really loved him, which involved him in ruin. Had he frankly declared his folly, and thrown himself upon Wildegrave's generosity, he would as frankly have been forgiven; but pride and false shame kept his lips sealed.

He was a very young man—a novice in the ways of the world; and even in some degree ignorant of the nature of the crime, the commission of which had made him so unhappy. Instead of a breach of trust, he looked upon it as a felonious offence, which rendered him amenable to the utmost severity of the law. The jail and the gallows were ever in his thoughts; and worse than either, the infamy which would for ever attach itself to his name.

He determined to see his father for the last time, and if he failed in moving his compassion, he had formed the desperate resolution of putting an end to his own life in his presence; a far greater crime than that for which he dreaded receiving a capital punishment.

"Clary," he said, hastily thrusting the letter into his pocket, "business of importance calls me away to-night. Do not be alarmed if I should be detained until the morning."

"You cannot go to-night, Anthony. It has rained all the afternoon. The ground is wet. The air is raw and damp. You are not well. If you leave the house you will take cold!"

"Do not attempt to detain me, Clary, I must go. I shall leave a letter for your brother on the table, which you must give him if I do not return."

"Something is wrong. Tell me, oh, tell me what it is!"

"You will know all to-morrow," said Anthony, greatly agitated. "I cannot speak of it to-night." He took her hand and pressed it sadly to his heart. "Should we never meet again, dear Clary, will you promise to think kindly of me; and, in spite of the contempt of the world, to cherish your cousin's memory?"

"Though all the world should forsake you, yet will I never desert you," sobbed Clary, as, sinking into his extended arms, she fainted on his breast.

"This will kill you, poor innocent. May God bless and keep you from a knowledge of my guilt." He placed her gently upon the sofa, kissed her pale lips and brow, and calling Ruth to her assistance, sought with a heavy heart his own chamber.

He sat down and wrote a long letter to Frederic, explaining the unfortunate transactions which had occurred during his absence. This letter he left upon the study table, and, putting a brace of loaded pistols in his pocket, he sallied out upon his hopeless expedition.

It had been a very wet afternoon. The clouds had parted towards nightfall, and the moon rose with unusual splendour, rendering every object in his path as distinctly visible as at noon day. The beauty of the night only seemed to increase the gloom of Anthony Hurdlestone's spirit. He strode on at a rapid pace, as if to outspeed the quick succession of melancholy thoughts, that were hurrying him on to commit a deed of desperation. He entered the great avenue that led up to the back of the Hall, and past the

miser's miserable domicile, and had traversed about half the extent of the darkly shaded path, when his attention was aroused by a tall figure leaning against the trunk of a large elm tree. A blasted oak, bare of foliage, on the opposite side of the road, let in a flood of light through its leafless branches, which shone full upon the face of the stranger, and Anthony, with a shudder, recognised William Mathews.

"A fine evening for your expedition, Mr. Hurdlestone. It might well be termed the forlorn hope ; however I wish with all my heart that you may be successful." As he spoke he lowered a fowling-piece from his shoulder to the ground. "Do you hear that raven that sits croaking upon the rotten branch of the old oak opposite ? Does not his confounded noise make you nervous ? It always does me. It sounds like a bad omen. I was just going to pull down at him as you came along. I fancy, however, that he's too far above us for a good shot."

"I am in no humour for trifling to-night," said Anthony, stopping and glancing up at the



bird, who sat motionless on a decayed branch a few yards above his head. "If you are afraid of such sounds, you can soon silence that for ever."

"It would require a good eye, and an excellent fowling-piece, to bring down the black gentleman from his lofty perch. I have heard that you, Mr. Hurdlestone, are accounted a capital shot, far before your cousin Godfrey. I wish you would just give me a trial of your skill."

"Nonsense!" muttered Anthony. "The bird's only a few yards above us. A pistol would bring him down."

"I should like to see it done," said Mathews, with a grin. "Here, sir, take my gun."

Impatient of interruption, and anxious to get rid of the company of a man whose presence he loathed, Anthony drew one of the pistols from his breast pocket, and, taking a deliberate aim at the bird, he fired, and the raven fell dead at his feet. Picking it up, and tossing it over to Mathews, he said—"Do you believe me now? Pshaw! it was not worth staining my hands

and clothes with blood for such a paltry prize."

Mathews laughed heartily at this speech; but there was something so revolting in the tones of his mirth, that Anthony quickened his pace to avoid its painful repetition. A few minutes more brought him in sight of the miser's cottage. No light gleamed from the broken casement, and both the door and the window of the hovel were wide open, and flapping in the night wind. Surprised at a circumstance so unusual, Anthony hastily entered the house. The first object that met his sight rivetted him to the threshold.

The moon threw a broad line of silver light into the dusty worm-eaten apartment, and danced and gleamed in horrid mockery upon a stream of dark liquid which was slowly spreading itself over the floor. And there, extended upon the brick pavement, his features shockingly distorted, his hands still clenched, and his white locks dabbled in blood, lay the cold mutilated form of his father.

Overpowered with horror, unable to advance or retreat, Anthony continued to gaze upon the horrid spectacle, until the hair stiffened upon his head, and a cold perspiration bedewed all his limbs.

Still as he gazed he fancied that the clenched hands moved, that a bitter smile writhed the thin parted lips of the dead; and influenced by a strange fascination, against which he struggled in vain, he continued to watch the ghastly countenance, until horror and astonishment involved every other object in misty obscurity.

He heard the sound of approaching footsteps, but his limbs had lost the power of motion, his tongue of speech, and he suffered the constables, who entered with Grenard Pike, to lead him away without offering the least resistance. They placed him in a post-chaise, between two of the officers of justice, and put the irons upon his wrists; but he remained in the same state of stupefaction, making no remark upon his unusual situation, or taking the least notice of his strange companions. When the vehicle stopped at the entrance of the

county jail, then, and not until then, did the awfulness of his situation appear to strike him. Starting from his frightful mental abstraction, he eagerly demanded of the officers why his hands were manacled, and for what crime they had brought him there?

When told for the murder of his father, he regarded the men with a look of surprised incredulity. "My poor father! what interest could I have to murder my father? You cannot think I committed this horrid crime?"

"We do not know what to think, Mr. Hurdlestone," said one of the men. "I am very sorry to see you in this plight, but appearances are very much against you. Your father was an old man and a bad man, and it is little you owed to his parental care. But he could not have lived many years, and all the entailed property must have been yours; it was an act of insanity on your part to kill him. A fearful crime to send him so unprepared into the presence of his God."

"You cannot believe me guilty," said Anthony.

The men shook their heads. "I condemn no

man until the law condemns him," returned the former spokesman. "But there is evidence enough in your case to hang a hundred men."

"I have one witness in my favour. He knows my innocence, and to Him I appeal," said Anthony, solemnly.

"Aye, but will he prove it, my lad?"

"I trust He will."

"Well, time will show. The assizes will be held next week, so you have not long to remain in doubt. I would be inclined to think you innocent, if you could prove to me what business you had with loaded pistols in your possession—why one was loaded, and the other unloaded, and how your hands and clothes came stained with blood—why you quarrelled with the old man last night, and went to him again to-night with offensive weapons on your person, and at such an unseasonable hour? These are stubborn facts."

"They are, indeed," sighed the prisoner. A natural gush of feeling succeeded, and from that hour Anthony resigned himself to his fate.

## CHAPTER X.

O dread uncertainty,  
Life-wasting agony,—  
How dost thou pain the heart,  
Causing such tears to start  
As sorrow never shed  
O'er hopes for ever fled !—S. M.

WHAT a night of intense anxiety was that to the young Clary ! Hour after hour, she paced the verandah in front of the cottage ; now listening for approaching footsteps, now straining her eyes to catch through the gloom of the fir-trees the figure of him for whom she watched and wept in vain. The cold night wind sighed through her fair locks, scattering them upon the midnight air. The rising dews chilled the fragile form, but stilled not the wild throbbing of the aching heart.

“ Oh, to know the worst—the very worst—were

better than this sore agony." Years of care were compressed into that one night of weary watching. "He will never come. I shall never, never see him again. I feel now, as I felt when my sisters were taken from me, that I should see them no more on earth. But I cannot weep for him as I wept for them. I knew that they were happy, that they were gone to rest, and I felt as if an angel's hand dried my tears. But I weep for him as one without hope, as for one whom a terrible destiny has torn from me. I love him, but my love is a crime, for he loves another. Oh, woe is me! Why did we ever meet, if thus we are doomed to part?"

She looked up at the cold clear moon—up to the glorious stars of night, and her thoughts, so lately chained to earth, soared upwards to the Father of her spirit, and once more she bowed in silent adoration to her Saviour and her God.

"Forgive me, holy Father!" she murmured. "I have strayed from thy fold, and my steps have stumbled upon the rough places of the earth. I have reared up an idol in thy sacred temple, and

worshipped the creature more than the Creator. The love of the world is an unholy thing. It cannot satisfy the cravings of an immortal spirit. It cannot fill up the emptiness of the human heart. Return to thy rest, O my soul! I dedicate thee and all thy affections to thy God!"

She bowed her head upon her hands and wept; such tears purify the source from whence they flow, and Clary felt a solemn calm steal over her agitated spirit, as, kneeling beneath the wide canopy of heaven, she prayed long and earnestly for strength to subdue her passion for Anthony, and to become obedient in word, thought, and deed, to the will of God; and she prayed for him, with a fervour and devotion which love alone can give—prayed that he might be shielded from all temptation, from the wickedness and vanity of the world, from the deceitfulness of his own heart.

She was still in the act of devotion, when the sound of rapidly approaching footsteps caused her to start suddenly from her knees. A man ran past at full speed, then another, and another:



then a group of women without hats and shawls, running and calling to one another. What could all this mean, at that still hour of night, and in that lonely place?

Clary's heart beat tumultuously. She rushed to the garden gate, that opened from the lawn into the main road. She called aloud to one of the retreating figures to stop and inform her what was the matter. Why they were abroad at that late hour, and whither they were going? No one slackened their speed, or stayed one moment to answer her enquiries. At length an old man, tired and out of breath, came panting along; one whom Clary knew, and springing into the road she intercepted his path.

"Ralph Hilton, what is the matter? Is there a fire in the neighbourhood? Where are you all going?"

"Up to the Hall, Miss Clary. Dear, dear, have you not heard the news? The old man has been murdered. Murdered by his son. Alack, alack, 'tis a desperate piece of wickedness! The coroner is up at the old cottage, sitting upon the

body, and I want to get a sight of the murdered man, like the rest of 'un."

"Who is it you mean? Who has been murdered?" gasped out the terrified girl.

"Why old Squire Hurdlestone. He has been shot dead by his own son—that young chap who has been staying here so long. They have got him safe, though. And by this time he must be in jail. Oh, I hope they will hang 'un. But hanging is too good. He should be burnt alive."

And here the old man hobbled on, eager to get a sight of the frightful spectacle, and to hear all the news from the fountain head.

The first blush of the red dawn was glowing in the east; but Clary still remained in the same attitude, with her hand resting upon the half-open gate, her eyes fixed on vacancy, her lips apart, a breathing image of despair. The stage coach from —— drove briskly up. A gentleman sprang from the top of the vehicle. A portmanteau was flung down to him by the guard.—"All right," and the horses were again at full gallop.

"Clary, dear Clary, who would have thought of your being up so early to meet me?"

That voice seemed to recall the wandering spirit of the pale girl back to its earthly tabernacle. With a long wild cry, she flung herself into her brother's arms. "Hide me in your heart, Frederic, hide me from myself. I am sick and weary of the world!"

Unable to comprehend the cause of this violent agitation, Frederic Wildegrave carried his now insensible sister into the house, and calling Ruth, who was busy kindling the fires, he bade her awake Mr. Anthony. The woman shook her head mysteriously.

"He's gone, sir. He left us suddenly last night, and Miss Clary has been up ever since."

"I fear it is as I suspected. He must have robbed me. Yet, if he has deceived me, I never will trust to physiognomy again."

He opened his desk, and found two hundred pounds in notes, and turning to the window to examine them, he recognised the letter addressed to him by Anthony that was lying on the table.

With feelings of compassion and astonishment, he hastily glanced over the affecting account it contained of the thrilling events of the past week. Several times the tears sprang to his eyes, and he reproached himself for having suspected Anthony of having eloped with the money left in his charge. He knew what agony of mind his cousin must have endured before he could prevail upon himself to petition his relentless father for the loan of the sum he had imprudently lent to Godfrey. He only blamed him for the want of confidence which had hindered him from communicating his situation to his friend. Fearing that he had been induced to commit some desperate act, he did not wait to change his dress, or partake of the breakfast old Ruth had provided, but mounting a horse, rode full speed to Ashton.

Long before he reached the village, he learned the dreadful tale of the murder, and though he did not like to believe Anthony guilty, he knew not how to get satisfactorily over the great mass of circumstantial evidence, which even his own letter contained against him. Every person with

whom he talked upon the subject held the same opinion, and many who before had execrated the old man, and spoke with abhorrence of his conduct to his son, now mentioned him with pity and respect, and decried the young man as a monster, for whom hanging was too good, who deserved to die a thousand deaths.

Deeply grieved for his unfortunate relative, Wildegrave at first defended him with some warmth, and urged as an excuse for his conduct the unnatural treatment he had from infancy received from his father.

"Sir," said an old farmer, who had formed one of the jury during the inquest, "with all his faults, old Mark was an honest man, and doubtless he had good reasons for his conduct, and knew the lad better than we did, as the result has proved."

"It has not been proved yet," said Frederic, "and I believe, however strongly appearances are against him, that Anthony Hurdlestone never committed the murder."

"Mr. Wildegrave, I am sorry to contradict a

gentleman like you, but did not Grenard Pike see him with his own eyes fire at the old man through the window? And has he not known the lad from a baby?"

"He will be hung," said another farmer, riding up; "and that's not half punishment enough for such a villain!"

"He should be torn to pieces," cried a third.

"He was a queer little boy," said a fourth; "I never thought that he would come to any good."

"His uncle was the ruin of him," said a fifth. "If he had never taken him from his father, the old man would have been alive this day."

"Oh hang him!" cried another. "I don't pity the old miser. He deserved his death—but 'twas terrible from the hand of his own son."

"Old Mark is to have a grand funeral," said the first speaker. "He is to be buried on Monday. All the gentlemen in the county will attend."

"It would break his heart, if he were alive,"

said another, "could he but see the fine coffin that Jones is making for him. It is to be covered all over with silk velvet and gold."

"How old was he?" asked some voice in the group.

"Just in his sixty-fifth, and a fine hale man for his years; he might have lived to have been a hundred."

"Did they find any money in the house?" whispered a long-nosed sharp-visaged man; "I heard that he had lots hidden away under the thatch. Old Grenard knows that a box containing several thousand gold guineas was taken away."

"Then the devil, or old Grenard, must have flown away with it," said the sexton of the parish, "for I was there when they seized the poor lad, and he had not a penny in his possession."

"Will they bury him with his wife?" asked the old farmer.

"He'll never rest beside her," said a man near him. "He treated her about as well as he did her poor boy."

"How can the like o' him rest in the grave?"

chimed in a female voice. "I've no manner of doubt but he'll haunt the old Hall, as his father did afore him. Mercy on us, sirs! what an awful like ghost he will make!"

"Was old Squire Anthony ever seen?" said another woman, in a mysterious whisper.

"Ay, scores of times. I've heard that the old miser met him one night himself upon the staircase, and that was the reason why he shut up the Hall."

"Who'll heir the property?" asked the old farmer.

"Algernon's son Godfrey; a fine handsome fellow. He'll make ducks and drakes of the miser's gold. We shall have fine times when he comes to the Hall."

"He'll lower the rents and the tithes upon us. Come, my lads, let's go to the public-house and drink his health."

The male portion of the group instantly acceded to the proposal; and Frederic Wildegrave set spurs to his horse and rode off, disgusted with the scene he had witnessed, and returned to his home with a sorrowful heart.



## CHAPTER XI.

All the fond visions faithful mem'ry kept,  
Rush'd o'er his soul, he bow'd his head and wept,  
Such tears as contrite sinners pour alone,  
When mercy pleads before the eternal throne ;  
When naked, helpless, prostrate in the dust,  
The spirit owns its condemnation just,  
And seeks for pardon and redeeming grace,  
Through Him who died to save a fallen race.—S. M.

By the light of a solitary candle, and seated at a small table in the attic of a public-house, and close to the miserable bed in which Mary Mathews was tossing to and fro in the restless delirium of fever, two men were busily engaged in dividing a large heap of gold, which had been emptied from a strong brass-bound box, that lay on the floor.

“Well, the old fellow died game,” said Mathews. “Did you see how desperately he clenched his teeth, and how tightly he held the

key of his treasures. I had to cut through his fingers before I wrenched it from his grasp. See, it is all stained with blood. Faugh! it smells of carrion."

"He took me for Anthony," said Godfrey, shuddering; "and he cursed me—oh, how awfully! He told me that we should meet in hell; that the gold for which he had bartered his soul, and to obtain which I had committed murder, had bought us an estate there. And then he laughed—that horrid, dry, satirical laugh. Oh, I hear it yet. It would almost lead me to repentance, the idea of having to pass an eternity with him."

"Don't feel squeamish now, man. This brave sight," pointing to the gold, "should lay all such nervous fancies to rest. The thing was admirably managed; and between ourselves, I think that, if we had not pinked him, that same virtuous son of his would. What did he want with pistols? It looks queer."

"It will condemn him."

"Let us drink to his rising in the world," said the ruffian, handing the brandy bottle to his

companion in guilt. How much money is there?"

"Two thousand five hundred pounds in gold."

"A pretty little fortune. How do you mean to divide the odd hundreds?"

"I want them for a particular purpose. There is a thousand; I think you ought to be satisfied. It was my bullet that unlocked the box, when I brought the old man down."

"You don't mean to say, that you intend to appropriate five hundred pounds for the mere act of shooting the old dog, when I ran as much risk as you?"

"Sit down, Bill;" for the smuggler had sprung to his feet, and stood before his colleague in a menacing attitude; "and don't look so fierce. It won't do for you and I to quarrel. I meant it for a marriage portion for Mary; surely you don't wish to rob her?"

"It's just the same as appropriating it to yourself," growled the villain; "you know that she can't keep anything from you."

"Mary, my pet," said Godfrey, now half

intoxicated with the brandy he had drank, taking up a handful of the money and going up to the bed, "I heard you say a few days ago that you wanted a new frock; look, here is plenty of money to buy you a score of smart dresses. Will you not give me a kiss for all this gold?"

The girl turned her wide wandering eyes upon him, glanced at his hands, and uttered a wild scream.

"Why, Mary! what the deuce ails you?"

"What's that upon your hands, Godfrey? What's that upon your hands? It's blood—blood! Oh, take it away; don't bring to me the price of blood!"

"Nonsense; you are dreaming, girl—gold can gild every stain."

"I have been dreaming," said Mary, rising up in the bed, and putting back the long hair which had escaped from under her cap, and now fell in rich neglected masses round her pallid face. "Yes, I have been dreaming—such an awful dream! I see it before me yet."

“What was it, Mary?” asked her brother, with quivering lips.

“It was a lonesome place,” continued the girl, “a dark lonesome place; but God’s moon was shining there, and there was no need of the sun, or of any other light, for all seemed plain to me as the noon day.

“I saw an old man with grey hairs, and another man old and grey was beside him. The countenances of both were dark and unlovely. And one old man was on his knees—but it was not to God he knelt; he had set up an idol to worship, and that idol was gold; and God, as a punishment, had turned his heart to stone, so that nothing but the gold could awaken the least sympathy there. And whilst he knelt to the idol, I heard a cry—a loud, horrid, despairing cry—and the old man fell to the earth weltering in his blood; but he had still strength to lock up his idol, and he held the key as tightly as if it had been the key of heaven. And I saw two young men enter the house and attack the old man, while his companion, whom they did not

see, stole out of a back door and fled. And they dashed the wounded old man against the stones, and they marred his visage with savage blows; and they trod him underfoot, and tore from him his idol, and fled.

“And I saw another youth with a face full of sorrow, and while he wept over the dead man, he was surrounded by strange figures, who, regardless of his grief, forced him from the room. And while I pondered over these things in my heart, an angel came to my bedside, and whispered a message from God in my ears. And I awoke from my sleep; and lo, the old man’s idol was before me, and his blood was upon your hands, Godfrey Hurdlestone.”

“Is this a dream?” cried Godfrey, glancing instinctively at his hands, on whose white well-formed fingers no trace of the recently enacted tragedy remained, “or did you really witness the scene you have just described; tell me the truth, Mary, or by ——”

“Could these feeble limbs carry me to Ashton,” said the girl, interrupting the dreadful oath ere it

found utterance, "or could this rocking brain steady them,—were I, indeed, able to rise from my bed—"

"Mathews," cried Godfrey, "what do you think of this?"

"That we should be off, or put such dreamers to silence."

"Be off! That's impossible. It would give rise to the suspicion that we were the murderers. Besides, are we not both subpoenaed as witnesses against him?"

"I don't like it," said Mathews, gloomily. "The devil has revealed every circumstance to the girl. What if she were to witness against us?"

"Nonsense! Who would take the evidence of a dream?" said Godfrey.

"I'm not so sure that it was a dream. You know her of old. She's very cunning."

"But the girl's too ill to move from her bed. Besides, she never would betray me."

"I'm not so sure of that. She's turned mighty religious of late. It was only last night that I heard her pray to God to forgive her sinful

soul ; and then she promised to lead a new life. Now I should not wonder if she were to begin by hanging us."

"If I thought so," said Godfrey, grasping a knife he held in his hand, and glancing towards the bed. "But no. We both do her injustice. She would die for me. She would never betray me. Mary," he continued, going to the bed-side, "what was the message that the angel told you?"

"It was in the unknown tongue," said Mary. "I understood it in my sleep, but since I awoke it has all passed from my memory." Then laughing in her delirium, she burst out singing :

His voice was like the midnight wind,  
That ushers in the storm,  
When the thunder mutters far behind  
On the dark clouds onward borne ;  
When the trees are bending to its breath,  
The waters plashing high,  
And nature crouches pale as death  
Beneath the lurid sky.  
'Twas in such tones he spake to me,  
So awful and so dread ;  
If thou would'st read the mystery,  
Those tones will wake the dead.

\* \* \* \*



"She is mad!" muttered Godfrey, resuming his seat at the table. "Are you afraid, Bill, of the ravings of a maniac? Come, gather up courage and pass the bottle this way; and tell me how we are to divide the rest of the spoil."

"Let us throw the dice for it."

"Agreed. Who shall have the first chance?"

"We will throw for that. The lowest gains. I have it," cried Mathews, clutching the box.

"Stop!" said Mary. "Fair play's a jewel. There are three of you at the table. Will you not let the old man have one chance to win back his gold?"

"The Devil!" cried Mathews, dropping the box, and staggering to his seat, a universal tremor perceptible in his huge limbs. "Where—where is he?"

"At your elbow," said Mary. "Don't you see him frown and shake his head at you? How fast the blood pours down from the wound in his head! It is staining all your clothes. Get up, William, and give the poor old man the chair."

"Don't mind her, Mathews, she is raving," said Godfrey. "Do you see anything?"

"I thought I saw a long, bony, mutilated hand, flitting to and fro, over the gold. Ah! there it is again," said Mathews, starting from his chair. "You may keep the money, for may I be hanged if I will touch it. Leave this accursed place and yon croaking fiend. Let us join the boys down stairs, and drink and sing, and drive away care."

And so the murderers departed, leaving the poor girl alone with the gold,—but they took good care to lock the door after them. When they were gone, Mary threw an old cloak about her, which formed part of the covering to the bed, and stepped upon the floor.

"They are gone," she said; "I have acted my part well. But, alas, this is no place for me. I am called upon by God himself to save the innocent, and the mission shall be performed, even at the expense of my worthless life.

"They think not that I followed them to the spot—that, weak as I am, God has given me

strength to witness against them. I feel ill, very ill," she continued, putting her hand to her head. "But if I could only reach the Lodge, and inform Captain Whitmore, or Miss Juliet, it might be the means of saving his life. At all events, I will try."

As she passed the gold that glittered in the moonbeams, she paused. "I want money for my journey. Shall I take aught of the accursed thing? No. I will trust in Providence to supply my wants. I have read somewhere, that misery travels free."

Then slowly putting on her clothes, and securing a slice of coarse bread, that Mrs. Strawberry had brought for her supper, in her handkerchief, Mary approached the window. The distance was not great to the roof of the lean-to, and she had been used to climb tall forest trees when a child, and fearlessly to drop from any height. She unclosed the casement and listened. She heard from below loud shouts and boisterous peals of laughter, mingled with licentious songs and profane oaths.

When the repentant soul is convinced of sin, how dreadful does the language once so familiar appear! The oath and the profane jest smite upon it with a force which makes it recoil within itself; and it flies for protection to the injured Majesty it so often wantonly defied. "Alas, for the wicked!" said Mary. "'Destruction and misery are in their paths, and the way of peace they have not known.' How long have I, in word, thought, and deed, blasphemed the majesty of the Most High, and rebelled against his holy laws! Ought I then to condemn my fellows in iniquity? Am I in reality any better than they? I will go to the grave of my child—that sight will keep me humble—that little mound of dark earth holds all that the world now contains for me."

She dropped from the window to the ground. The watch-dog knew her and forbore to bark. He thrust his cold nose into her wasted hand, and wagging his tail looked up inquiringly into her face. There was something of human sympathy in the expression of the generous brute. It

went to the heart of the poor wanderer. She leant down and kissed the black head of the noble dog. A big bright tear glittered among his shaggy hair, and the moonbeams welcomed it with an approving smile.

Like a ghost Mary glided down the garden path, overgrown with rank weeds, and she thought that that neglected garden greatly resembled the state of her soul. A few necessary wants had alone been attended to. The flower-beds were overgrown and choked with weeds—the fruit-trees barren from neglect and covered with moss. “But He can make the desolate place into a fruitful field,” said Mary. “The wilderness, under his fostering care, can blossom like the rose.”

She crossed the lane, and, traversing several lonely fields, she came to the park near the old Hall, within whose precincts the gothic church, erected by one of the ancestors of the Hurdlestons, reared aloft its venerable spire. How august the sacred building looked in the moonlight! how white the moonbeams lay upon the graves! Mary

sighed deeply, but hers was not a mind to yield easily to superstitious fears. She had learned to fear God, and there was nothing in his beautiful creation which could make her tremble, save the all-seeing eye which she now felt was ever upon her.

Passing the front of the church, where all the baptized children of the village for ages had found their place of final rest, she stepped behind a dark screen of yews, at the back of the church, and knelt hastily upon the ground beside a little mound of freshly turned sods. Stretching herself out upon that lowly bed, and embracing it with passionate tenderness, the child of sin and sorrow found a place to weep, and poured out her full heart to the silent ear of night.

The day was breaking, when she slowly rose and wiped away her tears. Regaining the high road, she was overtaken by a man in a waggon, who had been one of the crowd that had been to look at the murdered man. He invited Mary to take a seat in the waggon, and finding that he was going within a few miles of Norgood, she joyfully

accepted the offer—and before Godfrey and her brother recovered from their drunken debauch, or found that she was missing, she was near the end of her journey.

## CHAPTER XII.

The lyre is hush'd, for ever hush'd the hand,  
That woke to ecstasy its thrilling chords ;  
And that sweet voice, with music eloquent,  
Sleeps with the silent lyre, and broken heart.—S. M.

“WHY do you look so sad, Juliet?” said Captain Whitmore to his daughter, as they stood together at the open window, the morning after her perilous meeting with Mary Mathews in the park. “Have *I* said anything to wound your feelings?”

“I thought that you would have been so glad to find him innocent, papa,” said Juliet, the tears again stealing down her cheeks, “and I am disappointed—bitterly disappointed.”

“Well, my girl, I am glad that the lad is not guilty of so heinous an offence. But I can’t help feeling a strong prejudice against the whole



breed. These Hurdlestons are a bad set—a bad set. I have seen enough of them. And, for your own happiness, I advise you, my dear Juliet, to banish this young man for ever from your thoughts. With my consent, you never shall be his wife.”

“Without it, I certainly never shall.” And Juliet folded her hands together, and turned away to hide the fresh gush of tears that blinded her eyes. “At the same time, papa, I must think that the ill-will you bear to an innocent person is both cruel and unjust.”

“Juliet,” said the Captain, very gravely, “from the earnestness of your manner, I fear that you feel a deeper interest in this young Hurdlestone than I am willing to believe. Answer me truly—do you love the lad?”

“Father, I do love him. I feel that my happiness is inseparably connected with his.” This was said with that charming candour which was the most attractive feature in Juliet Whitmore’s character. It had its effect upon the old man’s generous nature. He could no

longer chide, however repugnant to his feelings the confession she had just made. He drew her gently to his manly breast, and kissed away the tears that still lingered on her cheeks.

"My poor girl, I am sorry for you—very sorry. But I see no chance of your ever becoming his wife."

"I am contented to remain single, papa; I never can love another as I love him."

"Stuff and nonsense! What should hinder you? Why, child, you will get over this romantic passion. Few people are able to marry the first person with whom they fall in love; and, in nine cases out of ten, they would be grievously disappointed if they did. This Anthony Hurdlestone may be a good young man, but his father is a very bad one. His children may inherit some of the family propensities, which you know, my little daughter, are everything but agreeable. I should not like to be grandpapa to a second edition of Mark Hurdlestone, or even of his hopeful nephew, Master Godfrey."

"Ah, my dear father," said Juliet, with great simplicity, "this may be all very true; but how do you know that we should have any children?"

This unexpected confession threw the old Captain, in spite of his grave lecture, into convulsions of laughter, whilst it covered his daughter's face with crimson blushes.

"Miss Juliet!" cried her aunt, who entered just in time to hear her niece speak her thoughts aloud, "I am perfectly astonished at you. Have you no sense of decorum?"

"Pshaw, Dolly!" said the Captain, still laughing. "It was quite accidental. Your over-delicate ladies are the most indelicate people in the world. I am sure what the child said was perfectly natural."

"Nature, Captain Whitmore, is not the best book for young ladies to study," said Miss Dorothy, drawing herself up to her full height. "If we were to act entirely from her suggestions, we should reduce ourselves to a level with the brutes. Young ladies should never venture a remark until they have duly considered what they

have to say. They should know how to keep the organ of speech in due subjection."

"And pray, Dolly, will you inform me at what age a lady should commence this laudable act of self-denial? for I am pretty certain that your first lesson is still to learn."

Oh, how poor Aunt Dorothy flounced and flew, at this speech! how she let her tongue run on, without bit or bridle, whilst vindicating her injured honour from this foul aspersion, quite forgetting her own theory in the redundancy of her practice! There never was, by her own account, such a discreet, amiable, well-spoken, benevolent, and virtuous gentlewoman! And how the cruel Captain continued to laugh at, and quiz, and draw her out; until Juliet, in order to cause a diversion in her aunt's favour, pinched her favourite black cat's ear. But this stratagem only turned the whole torrent of the old maid's wrath upon herself.

"How cruel you are, Miss Juliet!" she cried, snatching the ill-used darling to her bosom. "You never think that these poor animals can

feel ill-treatment as severely as yourself. I despise young ladies who write poetry, and weep and whine over a novel, yet are destitute of the common feelings of humanity."

"Puss will forgive me," said Juliet, holding out her small white hand to the cat, which immediately left off rubbing herself against Aunt Dorothy's velvet stomacher, to fawn upon the proffered peace-offering.

The old Captain, who had remained for some minutes in deep thought, now suddenly turned from the window, and said :

"Juliet, would you like to visit London?"

"What, at this beautiful season of the year!" And Juliet left off caressing the cat, and regarded her father with surprise, not unmixed with curiosity.

"The flowers of the gay world, Julee, always blossom at the same time with those in the country; only the latter have always this advantage, that they are never out of season, and blossom for the day, instead of for the night. But, my dear child, I think it is necessary for

you to go. The change of scene and air will be very beneficial to your health, and tend to invigorate both your mind and body. Now, don't pout and shake your head, Juliet; I do most earnestly wish you to go. The very best antidote to love is a visit to London. You will see other men,—you will learn to know your own power; and all these idle fancies will be forgotten. Aunt Dorothy, what say you to the trip?"

"Oh, sir, I am always ready at the post of duty. Juliet wants a little polishing—she is horribly countryfied. When shall we prepare for the journey?"

"Directly. I will write to her Aunt Seaford by to-night's post. She will be delighted to have Juliet with her. The little sly puss is the old lady's heir; but she is quite indifferent to her good fortune."

"I never covet the possession of great wealth," said Juliet. "Mark Hurdlestone is an awful example to those who grasp after riches. I do not anticipate much pleasure in this London visit; but I will go, dear papa, as you wish it."

"There's a dear good girl!" and the old man fondly kissed her. "I wish I could see the rose's blush once more upon this pale face. You look so like your mother, Julee, it makes my heart ache. Ah! just so thin and pale she looked, before I lost her. You must not leave your poor old father in this cold-hearted world alone."

Juliet flung her arms round his neck. "Do not make my heart ache, dear papa, as I know not how soon we may part. You once loved poor Anthony," she whispered: "for Julee's sake, love him still."

"She will forget him," said the Captain, looking fondly after her, as she left the room, "she will forget him in London."

And to London they went. Juliet was received by her rich aunt with the most lively demonstrations of regard. She felt proud of introducing to the notice of the gay world a creature so beautiful. Admired for her great personal attractions, and courted for her wealth, Juliet soon found herself the centre of attraction

to a large circle of friends. But ah! how vapid and tasteless to the young lover of nature were the artificial manners and the unmeaning flatteries of the world. Professions of attachment, breathed into her ears by interested admirers, shocked and disgusted her simple taste, and made her thoughts turn continually to the one adored object, whose candid and honest bearing had won her heart. His soul had been poured forth at the same shrine, had drunk inspiration from the same sacred fount, and his sympathies and feelings were in perfect unison with her own.

How could she forget Anthony, whilst mingling in scenes so uncongenial to her own pursuits? Was he not brought every hour nearer to her thoughts? Was she not constantly drawing contrasts between him and the worldly beings by whom she was surrounded? Did not his touching voice thrill more musically in her mental ear, when the affected ostentatious tones of the votary of fashion and pleasure tried to attract her attention by a display of his accom-



plishments and breeding? There was a want of reality in all she heard and saw that struck painfully upon her heart; and after the first novelty of the scene had worn off, she began to pine for the country. Her step became less elastic, her cheek yet paler, and the anxious father began to watch more closely these hectic changes, and to tremble for the health of his child.

"I am sick of this crowded place, of these sophisticated people, papa. I shall die here. Let me return to the country."

Frightened at the daily alteration in her appearance, the Captain promised to grant her request. Her aunt gave a large party the night before they were to leave town; and Juliet, to please her kind relative, exerted herself to the utmost to appear in good spirits.

"There has been a shocking murder committed in your neighbourhood, Miss Whitmore," said the officer, with whom she had been dancing, as he led her to a seat. "Have you seen the papers?"

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"No," said Juliet, carelessly. "I seldom read these accounts. They are so shocking; and we read them too much as matters of mere amusement and idle curiosity, without reflecting sufficiently upon the awful guilt which they involve."

"This is a very dreadful business indeed. I thought you might know something of the parties."

"Not very likely. We lead such a secluded life at the Lodge, that we are strangers to most of the people in the neighbourhood."

"You have heard of the eccentric miser, Mark Hurdlestone?"

"Who has not?" and Juliet started, and turned pale. "Surely he has not been murdered?"

"Yes; and by his own son."

"His son? Oh, not by his son! His nephew, you mean?"

"His son. Anthony Hurdlestone. The heir of his immense wealth."

He spoke to a cold ear. Juliet had fainted.

How did that dreadful night pass over the

hapless maiden? It did pass, however, and on the morrow she was far on her journey home.

"I never thought he could be guilty of a crime like this," said the Captain to his sister, as she sat opposite to him in his travelling carriage. His arm encircled the slender waist of his daughter, and her pale cheek rested on his shoulder. But no tear hung in the long, dark, drooping eyelashes of his child. Juliet was stunned; but she had not wept.

"He is not guilty," she cried in a passionate tone. "I know and feel that he is not guilty. Remember Mary Mathews,—how strong the circumstantial evidence against him in that case. Yet, he was innocent—innocent, poor Anthony!"

The Captain, who felt the most tender sympathy for the state of mind into which this afflicting news had thrown his child, was willing to soothe, if possible, her grief.

"If he is innocent, it will be proved on the trial, Julee, darling. We will hope for the best."

"It will be proved," said Juliet, sitting upright,

and looking her father earnestly, if not sternly, in the face. "I am so confident of his innocence, that, on that score, I have not shed a single tear. Ah! we are drawing near home," she continued, with a sigh. "Dear home! why did I leave it? There is something pure and holy in the very air of home. See, papa! there is the church spire rising above the trees. The dear old elm-trees! We shall have time to think here, to hope, to pray; but who is that woman lying along the bank. She is ill, or dead."

"Perhaps she is intoxicated," said Miss Dorothy.

"It is—yes—it is Mary Mathews!" cried Juliet, without noticing her aunt's remark. "What can bring her here?"

"No good, you may be sure," remarked the Captain.

"Oh! stop the carriage, dear papa, and let us speak to her. She may know something about the murder."

"You are right, Juliet; let us ask her a few questions."

They both left the carriage, and hurried to the spot where Mary, overcome with fatigue and fever, lay insensible and unconscious of her danger by the roadside.

Captain Whitmore lifted up the unhappy girl from the ground, and placed her in the carriage, greatly to the indignation of Miss Dorothy, and conveyed her to the Lodge. A medical gentleman in the neighbourhood was sent for; and Juliet, in the deep interest she felt for the alarming state of the poor sufferer, for a while forgot her own poignant grief.

The next morning, on entering the parlour, she found Frederic Wildegrave in close conversation with her father.

After the usual compliments had passed between them, Juliet asked, with an air of intense anxiety depicted on her fine countenance, if Mr. Wildegrave thought it possible that Anthony Hurdlestone had committed the murder?

He replied sorrowfully, "My dear Miss Whitmore, I know not what to think."

“Have you seen him since his imprisonment?”

“I have not. Many sorrows have confined me at home. This melancholy business has had a sad effect upon the weak nerves of my poor little sister. Clary is ill. I fear dying. She has expressed such a strong desire to see you, Miss Whitmore, once again, that I came over to make known to you her urgent request. It is asking of you a very great favour; but one, I hope, that you will not refuse to grant to our tears.”

“Juliet is in very poor health herself,” said her father. “If she could be spared this trying scene, it would be the better for her.”

“Poor, pretty Clarissa; and she is ill—is dying,” said Juliet, speaking unconsciously aloud. “This dreadful affair has killed her; and she wishes to see me. Yes, I will go.”

“My child, you know not what you are about to undertake,” said the old man, coming forward.

“It may be the death of you.”

“Dear papa, I am stronger than you think. I have borne a worse sorrow,” she added, in a whisper. “Let me go.”

“ Please yourself, Julee ; but I fear it will be too much for you.”

Frederic was anxious that Clary should be gratified ; and, in spite of Captain Whitmore’s objections, he continued, backed by Juliet, to urge his request. Reluctantly the old man yielded to their united entreaties.

Before Juliet set out upon her melancholy journey, she visited the sick chamber of the unconscious Mary Mathews, whom she strongly recommended to the care of Aunt Dorothy and her own waiting-woman. The latter, who loved her young mistress very tenderly, and who perhaps was not ignorant of her attachment to the young Hurdlestone, promised to pay every attention to the poor invalid during her absence. Satisfied with these arrangements, Juliet kissed her father ; and begging him not to be uneasy on her account, as for his sake she would endeavour to bear up against the melancholy which oppressed her, she accepted Mr. Wildegrave’s escort to Ashton.

During the journey, she found that Frederic

was acquainted with Anthony's attachment to her; and the frank and generous sympathy that he expressed for the unhappy young man won from his fair companion her confidence and friendship. He was the only person whom she had ever met to whom she could speak of Anthony without reserve, and he behaved to her like a true friend in the dark hour of doubt and agony.

The night was far advanced when they arrived at Millbank. Clary was sleeping, and the physician thought it better that she should not be disturbed.

The room allotted to Miss Whitmore's use was the one which had been occupied by Anthony. Everything served to remind her of its late tenant. His books, his papers, his flute, were there. Her own portfolio, containing the little poems he so much admired, was lying upon the table, and within it lay a bunch of dried flowers—wild flowers—which she had gathered for him upon the heath near his uncle's park; but what paper is that attached to the faded nosegay? It



is a copy of verses. She knows his hand-writing,  
and trembles as she reads—

Ye are wither'd, sweet buds, but love's hand can pourtray  
On memory's tablets each delicate hue ;  
And recall to my bosom the long happy day  
When she gather'd ye fresh sprinkled over with dew.  
Ah, never did garland so lovely appear,  
For her warm lip had breathed on each beautiful flower ;  
And the pearl on each leaf was less bright than the tear  
That gleam'd in her eyes in that rapturous hour.

Ye are wither'd, sweet buds, but in mem'ry ye bloom,  
Nor can nature's stern edict your loveliness stain ;  
Ye are fadeless and rich in undying perfume,  
And your sweetness, like truth, shall unalter'd remain.  
When this fond beating heart shall be cold in the grave,  
Oh, mock not my bier with fame's glittering wreath ;  
But bid on my temples these wither'd buds wave,  
Through life fondly cherish'd, and treasured in death.

And had he really kept these withered flowers  
for her sake? How did her soul flow up into  
her eyes, to descend upon those faded blossoms  
in floods of tears, as sadly she pressed them to  
her lips and heart!

Then came the dreadful thought—He whom  
you thus passionately love is a murderer, the  
murderer of his father! The hand that penned  
those tender lines has been stained with blood.

Shuddering, she let the flowers fall from her grasp. She turned, and met the mild beautiful eyes of his mother. The lifeless picture seemed to reproach her for daring for a moment to entertain such unworthy suspicions of her child, and she murmured for the hundredth time, since she first heard the tale of horror,—“No, no, I cannot believe him guilty.”

She undressed and went to bed. The bed in which he had so lately slept, in which he had passed so many wakeful hours in thinking of her; in forming bright schemes of future happiness, and triumphing in idea over the seeming impossibilities of his untoward destiny. His spirit appeared to hover around her, and in dreams she once more wandered with him through forest paths, eloquent with the song of birds, and bright with spring and sunshine.

Oh, love! how strong is thy faith! How confiding thy trust. The world in vain frowns upon the object of thy devotion. Calumny may blacken, and circumstances condemn, but thou, in thy blind simplicity, still clingest, through

storm and shine, to the imaginary perfections of thy idol.

To believe in the innocence of Anthony Hurdlestone was to hope against hope; yet Juliet firmly, confidently, and religiously believed him guiltless. Oh, who might not envy her this love and faith !

The robin red-breast from his fading bower of hawthorns warbled in the early dawn of the cold, bright, autumnal day. The first rays of the sun gilded the gay changing leaves of the vine that clustered about the windows with hues of the richest dye, and the large bunches of grapes peeping from among the leaves looked more temptingly ripe, bathed in dew and brightened in the morning beam. A slight rap at her chamber door dispelled Juliet's slumbers, and Ruth Candler entered the room.

"Is anything wrong, Ruth?"

"My mistress is awake, and wishes to see you, Miss," said Ruth, bursting into tears. "It's the last morn, I'm thinking, that she'll ever see on earth. She's in no pain, she says, but she is so

pale, and her eyes do not look like the eyes of the living. Alas ! alas ! what shall we do when she is gone ? The dear sweet young creter ! ”

Ruth wept aloud with her face to the wall, while Juliet hurried on her clothes, and, with a full heart, followed the old woman to the chamber of the invalid.

She found Clary sitting up in the bed, supported by pillows. Cold as it was, the casement was open to admit the full beams of the rising sun, and the arms of the dying girl were extended towards it, and her countenance lighted up with an expression of angelic beauty and intense admiration. Her brother was seated upon the bed, his face concealed in the pillow, while ever and anon a deep sob burst from his full labouring heart.

He had watched there through the long night — had watched and prayed while the dear one slept her last sleep on earth ; and he knew that the young spirit had only roused itself to look once more upon the lovely creation of God before it plumed its bright wing for its final flight.

“ Sun, beautiful sun ! I shall see thee no

more," said the child. "Thou glorious emblem of the power and love of God. But I go to him who is the Sun of the spirit-world, the life and light of the soul. There is joy in my heart—deep joy—joy which no mortal tongue can express, for the happiness I feel is not of the world. The fresh breezes of morning fan my brow ; to-morrow they will sigh over my grave. The earth returns to the earth, the spirit to the God who gave it. Weep not for me, dear brother. For this hour I was born. For this hour I came into the world, and you should rejoice and be exceedingly glad that I have so soon obtained my passport to the skies."

"Ah, my sister, what will life be to me, when you are gone? You are the last kindred tie that binds me to earth."

"There will be another strong tie to draw you towards heaven, my brother. Our spirits will not be divided. I shall still live in your memory—still visit you in dreams. Your love for me will grow stronger, for it will never know diminution or decay."

She paused for a few seconds, and folded her poor wasted hands together, whilst a serene smile passed over her wan features, lighting them with a holy joy.

“I had a dream last night, Frederic. A beautiful dream. If I have strength I will try and tell it to you. I thought much of Death last night, and my soul shrunk within me, for I felt that he was near. I did not fear Death while my heart was free from earthly love, but now he seemed to wear a harsh and terrible aspect. I prayed long and fervently to God to give me strength to enable me to pass tranquilly through the dark valley ; but in my heart I felt no response to my prayer. Soon after this, the pains, that had racked me all yesterday, left me, and I fell into a deep sleep. And then methought I stood in a narrow pass between two vast walls of black rock, that enclosed me on either side, and appeared to reach to the very clouds. The place was lighted by a dim twilight that flowed through an enormous arch that united in the far distance these gigantic walls ;

an arch, high and deep enough to have sustained the weight of the whole world. I felt like an atom in immensity, alone in that strange place. Still as I gazed in bewildered awe upon that great gateway, a figure rose like a dim mist out of the darkness, and it grew and brightened into a real and living presence; its dazzling robes of snowy whiteness shedding a sort of glorious moonshine all around. Oh, the beauty, the surpassing beauty of the heavenly vision! it filled my whole soul with light.

"Whilst I continued to gaze upon it with increasing awe and admiration, it addressed me in a voice so rich and melodious that it awoke echoes of soft music from those eternal rocks.

"'Child of earth,' he said, 'is my aspect so terrible that men should shrink from me in horror?'

"'Not so,' I exclaimed, in an extasy of joy. 'Your face is like the face of the angel of the Lord, when he welcomes the beloved with a smile of peace into the presence of God.'

"'Yet I am he whom men regard as their worst

enemy, and shrink from with cowardly fear. Yes, maiden, I am Death ! Death, the friend of man, the conqueror of grief and pain. I hold in my hand the keys of the unknown world. I am the bright spirit who unlocks for the good the golden gates of eternal joy.'

"He took my out-stretched hands, and drawing me forward, bade me look through the black archway into the far eternity. Oh, that glorious land, those rivers of delight—those trees and flowers, and warbled songs—that paradise of living praise ! I long, my brother, to break these bonds asunder, to pass the dark archway, and tread that heavenly shore."

"Happy Clary," said Juliet, softly approaching the bed. "Dear blessed girl, who would wish to detain you in this cold miserable world, when heaven offers you a brighter home?"

"You are come to see your poor friend, my Juliet," said Clary, twining her thin white arms about her neck. "The sight of you recalls me back to earth, filling my mind with sad thoughts and dark forebodings. Brother," she continued,



turning to Frederic, "leave us for a few minutes. I must speak to Juliet Whitmore, for a short space, alone."

For some seconds the two young creatures remained locked in each other's arms. Clary was the first to speak.

"The thoughts of heaven," she said, "are full of rapture; the recollections of earth, full of anguish and tears. It is not for myself, Juliet, I weep. It is for the living I mourn—for the friends I leave behind. For me—I have lived long enough. It is better for me to go, Juliet; I am dying; will you kiss me once more, and tell me that you forgive your poor little Clary for having dared to love one whose whole heart was given to you, and who was by you beloved again?"

"Was Anthony dear to your gentle heart, Clary?" said Juliet, stooping down, and kissing fervently the cold damp brow of the dying girl. "Oh, dearer, far dearer are you to me, in having thus shared, to its full extent, all the deep sorrow that weighs down my spirit."

"My love, Juliet, was full of hope and joy, of

blissful dreams and visions of peace and happiness. The storm came suddenly upon me, and the feeble threads that held together my frail existence parted in the conflict. I am thankful and resigned, and bless the hand that, in mercy, dealt the blow." After a few minutes' silence, she said very solemnly, "Anthony Hurdlestone is accused of having perpetrated a great crime. Do you, Juliet, believe him guilty?"

"When you believe that yon burning orb of fire is a mass of cold unmeaning ice," said Juliet, pointing to the sun, "then will I suspect the man I love to be a base unnatural monster, a thief and parricide."

"Then you, and you alone, Juliet, are worthy of his love. And he loves you. Ah! so truly, so well, I feel that he is innocent. A voice from heaven tells me so. Yes, dearest Juliet, God will yet vindicate his injured servant, and you and Anthony will meet again."

"In heaven," said Juliet, weeping.

"On earth," returned Clary, in feebler accents.

"When you see each other, Juliet, tell him that

Clary loved him, and prayed for him to the last ;  
that dying she blessed him, and believed him  
innocent. To you, Juliet, I leave my harp, the  
friend and companion of my lonely childhood.  
When you play the sweet airs I loved so well,  
think kindly of me. When you wander by  
sparkling brooks, and through flowery paths,  
listening to the song of birds, and the music of  
forest shades, remember me. Ah ! I have loved  
the bright and beautiful things of this glorious  
earth, and my wish has been granted, that I  
might pass hence, with sunshine about my bed,  
and the music of Nature's wild minstrels ringing  
in my ears. Sun of earth, farewell. Friends of  
earth, we shall meet again. See, heaven opens.  
Its one eternal day streams in upon my soul.  
Farewell.

“ Happy spirit, welcome in ;  
Hark ! the song of seraphim  
Hails thy presence at the throne—  
Earth is lost, and Heaven is won !  
Enter in.”

The voice died away in faint indistinct murmurs ; the eye lost the living fire ; the prophetic

lip paled to marble, quivered a moment, and was still for ever. The spirit of Clary had passed the dark gateway, and was the new-born of heaven.

"My sister; oh, my sister! Is she indeed gone from me for ever?" exclaimed Frederic, bursting into the room, and flinging himself upon the bed beside her. "Clary! my angel! Clary! What! cold and dead? Oh, my poor heart!"

"Oh, how I envy her this blessed change!" said Juliet.

"Aye, 'tis a sin to weep for her. But grief is selfish, Miss Whitmore; it will have its way. Oh! sister, dear sister, why did you leave me alone, the last survivor of an unfortunate race?"

And thus sorrow poured forth its querulous wailings into the cold ear of death. The storm which bereaves us of our best affections passes over; the whirlwind, the thunder, and the shower, desolating our harvest of expected joys; but the sun bursts forth again. Hope blossoms afresh in its beams, and the heart of man revives to form new schemes of future enjoyment. Such is life.

## CHAPTER XIII.

And hast thou sought me in this dreary cell,  
This dark abode of guilt and misery ;  
To win my sadden'd spirit back to earth  
With words of blessed import ?—S. M.

THE assizes were rapidly approaching. Conscious of his innocence, as far as the murder of his father was concerned, Anthony Hurdlestone looked forward to his trial with firmness and composure. There never was a greater mass of circumstantial evidence brought against a prisoner than in his memorable case.

Holding an elevated position in society, his trial created a great amount of interest and curiosity among all ranks, and the court was crowded to excess. The youth of the criminal, his gentlemanly bearing, his fine expressive countenance, his thoughtful mild eye, and

benevolent brow excited surprise in the beholders, and gave rise to many doubts as to his being the murderer; and the calm dignified manner in which he listened to the evidence given against him tended greatly to increase the interest which was expressed by many in his awful situation.

Grenard Pike was the first witness called, and he deposed—

That on the evening of the tenth of October, between the hours of eight and nine, he and the elder Hurdlestone were seated at a table, counting money into a mahogany brass-bound box. He (Grenard) saw a tall figure pass the window. Mr. Hurdlestone instantly called out, "Grenard, did you see that man?" and he, the witness, answered, "Yes, it is your son." Mr. Hurdlestone replied, in some alarm, "I told him to come to-night; but I did not think that he would take me at my word. What can he want with me?" The next moment a pistol was fired through the casement. The ball passed through Mr. Hurdlestone's shoulder. He fell to the floor across the

money-box, exclaiming, "My son! my cruel son! He has murdered me for my money; but he shall not have my money!" Witness looked up, and saw the murderer, by the light of the moon, standing by the window. He could swear to the person of Anthony Hurdlestone. Thinking his own life in danger, he made his escape into a back room, and got out of the window, and ran as fast as he could to the village, to give the alarm and procure a surgeon. When he returned, he found the prisoner leaning, apparently conscience-stricken, over the corpse. He offered no resistance when seized by the constables. He had no money in his possession. A pair of pistols was found in his coat pocket. One had been recently used; the other was still loaded. And there were stains of blood upon his hands and clothes.

He then related Anthony's previous visit to the cottage; the manner in which he had threatened his father; and the trick the miser had played off upon him, which circumstance had been faithfully detailed to him by old Mark, who regarded the latter as an excellent joke, although,

Grenard drily remarked, "It had cost him his life."

During Pike's evidence, the prisoner was greatly agitated, and was observed to lean heavily upon the dock for support. But when his cousin Godfrey and William Mathews appeared to add their testimony against him, his fortitude entirely forsook him, and he turned away, and covered his face for some minutes with his hands.

Godfrey's evidence was most conclusive. He stated that Anthony had borrowed from him, before his uncle's death, the sum of four hundred pounds, to settle some college debts which he had concealed from Colonel Hurdlestone's knowledge. Godfrey, willing to oblige him, had raised upon a note the greater part of the money. It became due, and he (Godfrey) being unable, from his altered circumstances, to meet it, went to his cousin, to beg him to do so, if possible. He was surprised that the prisoner was able to give him the sum at once, though he afterwards learned that it was money left in his charge by



Mr. Wildegrave that he had taken for that purpose. Anthony told him that Mr. Wildegrave had written to him for the money, and that he was greatly perplexed what to do. In this emergency, he (Godfrey) advised him to go to his father and state to him the difficulty in which he was placed, and, in all probability, the old man would rescue him from his unpleasant situation. He then related the result of the prisoner's interview with his father, the manner in which he had been repulsed, and the threatening language which the prisoner had used; his (Godfrey's) discovery of the trick which the hard old man had played off upon his son, and Anthony's determination to visit him again on the night of the tenth of October, and force him to terms. He concluded by saying, that he had every reason to believe that the intended visit had taken place at the very time that the murder was committed. He spoke of his cousin with much feeling, and tried to excuse his conduct, as being the result of his father's ill-treatment and neglect; and he commented upon Anthony's solitary habits, and

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sullen uncommunicative disposition, as having been fostered by these unfortunate circumstances.

His evidence was given in so frank and manly a way, and he seemed to sympathise so deeply in his cousin's unfortunate position, that he created quite a sensation among his listeners. No one imagined him to be in any way implicated in the crime.

The statement of William Mathews corroborated all that had been advanced by Godfrey Hurdlestone. He related his accidental meeting with Mr. Anthony Hurdlestone on his way to the miser's cottage, but he omitted the conversation that passed between them ; only stating, that he observed the muzzle of a pistol protruding from the pocket of the prisoner—a circumstance which, knowing the peaceable habits of the prisoner, astonished him at the time.

Long before Mathews had concluded his deposition, there remained not a doubt on the minds of the jury that Anthony Hurdlestone was the murderer. Even Captain Whitmore, who had

greatly interested himself on behalf of the young man, believed him guilty.

One witness still remained unheard, and Anthony still clung to hope; still anxiously anticipated that the evidence of Frederic Wildegrave would go far to save him. Alas! how great was his disappointment, when the circumstances related by his friend were more conclusive of his guilt than all the false statements that had been made by his enemies. His own letter, too, which was read in court, alone would have condemned him in the opinion of all unprejudiced men.

*"October 10th, 1790.*

"MY DEAR FREDERIC,

"I am certain that I have forfeited your good opinion, by omitting to send you the money you left in my keeping: I have forfeited my own. How shall I find words to tell you the dreadful truth, that the money is no longer in my possession; that, in a moment of excitement, I gave the deposit entrusted to my care to another?

"Yet listen to me for a few painful moments, before you condemn me utterly. My cousin

Godfrey came to me in great distress ; he implored me to save him from ruin, by obtaining for him a temporary loan, for a few hours, of four hundred pounds, which he faithfully promised to replace the following day. Hurried away by my feelings, I imprudently granted his request, and gave him the money you left with me. Do not wholly despise me, Frederic ; he looked so like my poor uncle, I knew not how to deny him.

“ This morning brought your letter. You ask for the money to be sent to you immediately. I have it not to send ; my sin has found me out. A thief and swindler ! Can it be possible that I have incurred such dreadful guilt ?

“ *Night.*—I have seen Godfrey—he has failed me. What shall I do ? I must go to my father ; perhaps he will relent, and pity my distress. My heart is torn with distracting doubts. Oh, that I could pour into some faithful bosom my torturing situation ! Clary is ill—and left to myself, I am lost.

“ *Midnight.*—I have seen my father. What a meeting. My brain aches while I try to recall it.

At first he insulted my agony ; taunted me with my misfortunes, and finally maddened me. I cannot describe to you what passed. Wound up to a pitch of fury, I threatened to obtain the money by violence, if he did not write an order upon his banker for the sum required. Cowering with fear, he complied ; and I—I, in the fullness of my heart, implored his pardon for the violence I had used, and blessed him. Yes, I blessed him, who only a few minutes before had spurned me from his feet—had mocked at my calamity—and cursed me in the savage malevolence of his heart. Some feeling of remorse appeared to touch his cruel breast ; as I left the house he called after me, ‘ Anthony, Anthony, to-morrow night I will do you justice.’ I will go to him no more. I feel that we have parted for ever.

“ *Thursday evening.*—The old man has deceived me—has jested with my distress. I could curse him, but I have not done so. To-night we shall have a fearful reckoning ; yes, to-night he will be compelled to do me justice.

“ Godfrey has been with me. He discovered

the cruel trick which the unnatural wretch, who calls himself my father, had played me—and he laughed. How could he laugh at such a melancholy instance of depravity? Godfrey should have been this man's son. In some things they resemble each other. Yes, he laughed at the trick. Is the idea of goodness existing in the human heart a mere dream? Are men all devils, or have some more tact to conceal their origin than others? I begin to suspect myself and all mankind. I will go once more to that hard-hearted man; if he refuses to grant my request, I will die at his feet. Last night I attempted suicide, but my good angel prevailed. To-night is my hour, and the power of darkness. Will he feel no touch of remorse when he beholds his neglected son—lost—bleeding—dying at his feet?

“Oh, that you were near to save me from myself! An unseen power seems hurrying, drawing me to perdition. The voice of a friend would dissolve the spell, and set the prisoner of passion free. The clock strikes eight—I must

go. Farewell, my friend, my brother; forgive and pity the unfortunate

“ANTHONY M. HURDLESTONE.”

He went—and the old man was found murdered. What more natural than such a consequence after penning such a letter? The spectators looked from one to the other; on every brow rested a cloud; every head was nodded in token of agreement; every one present, but Frederic Wildegrave, believed him guilty. He had retained no counsel, preferring to plead in his own defence.

He rose; every eye was fixed upon him,—men held their breath, wondering what sort of defence could issue from the lips of the parricide.

He spoke; the clear, rich, mellow, unimpassioned tones of his voice rolled over that mass of human heads, penetrating every heart, and reaching every ear.

“My lord, and you gentlemen of the jury,—I rise not with the idea of saving my life, by an avowal of my innocence, for the evidence which has been given against me is of too conclusive a

nature for me to hope for that ; I merely state the simple fact, that I am not guilty of the dreadful crime laid to my charge ; and I leave it to God, in whose hands are the issues of life and death, to prove the truth of my words.

“The greater part of the evidence brought against me is true ; the circumstances recorded against me really occurred ; the letter just read was penned by my own hand ; yet, in the face of these overwhelming facts, I declare myself innocent of the crime laid to my charge. I know not in what manner my father met his death. I am as ignorant as you can be of the hand that dealt the fatal blow. I confess that I sought his presence with the dreadful determination of committing murder ; but the crime was against myself. For this I deserve punishment—for this I am content to die ; to this charge, made by myself, I plead guilty. I look around me—in every face I see doubt and doom. I stand here a mark and scorn to the whole world ; but, though all unite in my condemnation, I still fearlessly and distinctly declare my innocence. I am



neither a parricide nor a murderer! and I now await my sentence with the calmness and fortitude which a clear conscience alone can give."

Murmurs of disapprobation ran through the court.

"What a hypocrite!" muttered some, as the jury left the court to consult together about the verdict.

"Do you observe the striking likeness between the prisoner at the bar and his cousin, the second witness against him?" whispered a gentleman in the crowd to a friend near him. "By Jove, 'tis a fearful resemblance. I would not be so like the murderer for worlds. 'Tis the same face."

"Perhaps," said his friend, "they are partners in guilt. I have my doubts. But 'tis unlawful to condemn any man."

"He's a bad fellow by his own account," said the other. "It was he who first led the prisoner to commit the theft. I think one of them deserves death as much as the other."

"Whist, man! Yon handsome rogue is the miser's heir."

"Humph!" said the first speaker. "If I were on the jury—"

"Here they come,—there is death in their very looks,—I thought as much,—he is found guilty."

The judge rose; a death-like stillness pervaded the court during his long and impressive address to the prisoner. The sentence of death was then pronounced, and Anthony Marcus Hurdlestone was ordered for execution on the following Monday.

"This dreadful day is at length over," he said, as he flung himself on his pallet of straw in the condemned cell, on the evening of that memorable day. "Thank God it is over, and I know the worst, and nothing now remains to hope or fear. A few brief hours and this weary world will be a dream of the past, and I shall awake from my bed of dust to a new and better existence, beyond the power of temptation—beyond the might of sin. My God, I thank Thee. Thou hast dealt justly with Thy servant. The soul that sinneth, it must die; and grievously have I sinned in seeking to mar Thy glorious image—to

cast the life thou gavest me as a worthless boon at Thy feet. I bow my head in the dust and am silent before Thee. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

His meditations were interrupted by the entrance of the chaplain of the jail—a venerable Christian who felt a deep interest in the prisoner, and who now sought him to try and awaken him to a full sense of his awful situation.

"My son," he said, laying his hand upon Anthony's shoulder, "how is it with you this night? What is God saying to your soul?"

"All is well," replied Anthony. "He is speaking to me words of peace and comfort."

"Your fellow-men have condemned you—" he paused, then added with a deep sigh, "—and I too, Anthony Hurdlestone, believe you guilty."

"God has not condemned me, good father, and by the light of His glorious countenance that now shines upon me, shedding joy and peace into my heart, I am innocent."

"Oh, that I could think you so!"

"Though it has seemed right in the eyes of

the All-wise Sovereign of the universe that I should be pronounced guilty before an earthly bar, I feel assured that He, in His own good time, will declare my innocence."

"Will that profit you aught, my son, when you are dust?"

"It will rescue my name from infamy, and give me a mournful interest in the memory of my friends."

"Poor lad, this is but a melancholy consolation; I wish I could believe you."

"What a monster of depravity you must think me, if you can imagine me guilty after what I have just said! Is truth so like falsehood, that a man of your holy calling cannot discern the difference? Do I look like a guilty man? Do I speak like a guilty man who knows that he has but a few days to live? If I were the wretch you take me for, should I not be overwhelmed with grief and despair? Would not the thought of death be insupportable? Oh! believe one who seeks not to live—who is contented to die, when I again solemnly declare my innocence."

"I have seen men, Anthony Hurdlestone, who, up to the very hour of their execution, persisted in the same thing; and yet, after all their solemn protestations, owned at the last moment that their sentence was just, and that they merited death."

"And I too have merited death," said Anthony, mournfully. "God is just."

The chaplain started; though but a few minutes before he had considered the prisoner guilty, yet it produced a painful feeling in his mind to hear him declare it.

"Is self-destruction murder?" asked Anthony with an anxious earnest glance.

"Aye, of the worst kind: for deep ingratitude to God, and contempt of his laws, are fearfully involved in this unnatural outrage."

"Then my sentence is just," sighed Anthony; "I never raised my hand against my father's life, but I raised it against my own. God has punished me for this act of rebellion against His Divine Majesty, in rejecting, as a thing of no value, the life He gave. I yield myself into His hands,

confident that His arm is stretched over His repentant creature for good ; whether I die upon the scaffold or end my days peacefully in my bed, I can lay my hand upon my heart and say—‘ His will be done.’ ”

For about an hour the good clergyman continued reading and praying with the prisoner, and before he left him that evening, in spite of his pre-conceived notions of his guilt, he was fully convinced of his innocence.

Sadly and solemnly the hours passed on that brought the morning of his execution, “with death-bed clearness, face to face.” He had joined in the sacred duties of the Sabbath; it was to him a day of peaceful rest—a foretaste of the quiet solemnity of the grave. In the evening he was visited by Frederic Wildegrave, who had been too ill after the trial to leave his bed before. He was pale, and wasted with sorrow and disease, and looked more like a man going to meet death than the criminal he came to cheer with his presence.

“ My dear Anthony,” said Frederic, taking his

cousin's hand, "my heart bleeds to see you thus. I have been sick ; my spirit is weighed down with sorrow, or we should have met sooner."

"You do indeed look ill," replied Anthony, examining, with painful surprise, the altered face of his friend ; I much fear that I have been the cause of this change. Tell me, Frederic, and tell me truly, do you believe me guilty ? "

"I have never for one moment entertained a thought to that effect, Anthony ; though the whole world should condemn you, I would stake my salvation on your integrity."

"Bless you, my friend ; my true, faithful, noble-hearted friend," cried Anthony, clasping the hand he held to his breast, "you are right ; I am not the murderer."

"Who is ? "

Anthony shook his head.

"That infernal scoundrel, Mathews ? "

"Hush ! Not him alone."

"Godfrey ? "

"Oh ! Frederic ; had you seen the triumphant smile that passed over his face at the moment that

my sentence was pronounced, you could entertain no doubt upon the subject. I heard not the sentence—I saw not the multitude of eyes fixed upon me—I only saw him—I only saw his eyes looking into my soul and laughing at the ruin he had wrought. But he will not go unpunished. There is one who will yet betray him, and prove my innocence ; I mean his hateful accomplice, William Mathews.”

“And can nothing be done to convict them?”

“They have sworn falsely, and perverted facts. I have no proof of their guilt. Would the world believe my statements? Would it not appear like the wolf accusing the lamb? For my poor uncle’s sake I am ready to suffer ; and for this cause, I employed no counsel to plead on my behalf : I would rather die myself than be the means of bringing to the scaffold the only son that he adored. Poor Algernon ! I have paid a heavy debt for his generosity to me. Yes,” he continued, more cheerfully, “I will leave Godfrey to enjoy his ill-gotten wealth, nor waste the few hours which now remain to me on earth in



vain regrets. How is it with the dear Clary ? How has she borne up against this dreadful blow ?”

Frederic’s sole answer was a mournful glance at the sables in which he was clad. Anthony comprehended in a moment the meaning of that sad, sad look. “She is gone,” he said—“she, the beautiful—the innocent. Yes, yes—I knew it would kill her, the idea of my guilt. Alas ! poor Clary !”

“She never thought you guilty,” said Frederic, wiping his eyes. “She bade me give you this letter, written with her dying hand, to convince you that she believed you innocent. Her faith towards you was as strong as death ; her love for you snapped asunder the fragile threads that held her to life. But she is happy. Dear child ! She is better off than those who weep her loss. And you, Anthony, you—the idol of her fond young heart—will receive her welcome to that glorious country, of which, I trust, she is now the bright inhabitant.”

“And she died of grief. Died—because others suspected of crime the man she loved. Oh, Clary !

Clary ! how unworthy was I of your love ! You knew I loved another, yet it did not diminish aught of your friendship, your pure devotion to me ! Oh, that I had your faith—your love ! ”

He covered his face with his hands, and both were silent for a long time.

“Frederic, we must part,” said Anthony, at length raising his head. “Beloved friend, we must part for ever ! ”

“I shall see you again to-morrow.”

“What ! on the scaffold ? ”

“Aye, on the scaffold ! Your place of martyrdom.”

“This is friendship indeed. Time may one day prove to you that Anthony Hurdlestone was not unworthy of your love.”

Frederic burst into tears afresh, and, wringing Anthony’s hand, hurried from the cell ; and the prisoner was once more left alone to commune with his own thoughts, and prepare for the awful change that awaited him.

His spirit, weaned as it was from the things of earth, contemplated with melancholy pleasure the

death of the young Clary, which he considered had placed his sweet young friend beyond the reach of human suffering.

"She is with the Eternal Present," he said. "No dark mysterious future can ever more cloud her soul with its heavy shadow. To-morrow—and the veil will be rent in twain, and our ransomed spirits will behold each other face to face. What is Death? The eclipse for a moment of the sun of human life. The shadow of earth passes from before it, and it again shines forth with renewed splendour."

His reverie was interrupted by the entrance of the jailor, followed by another person muffled up in a large riding cloak. "A stranger," he said, "wished to exchange a few words in private with the prisoner."

Anthony rose from his humble bed, and asked in subdued tones "To whom he had the honour of speaking?"

"To a sincere friend, Anthony Hurdlestone—one who cannot believe you guilty of the dreadful crime of murder."

The sound of that voice, though months had passed away since its musical tones had vibrated on his ear, thrilled to the soul of the prisoner.

"Miss Whitmore!" he cried, in an ecstasy of joy; and sinking at her feet, he seized her hands, and pressing them to his lips and heart burst into an agony of tears.

"Anthony!" said Juliet, placing her hand upon his shoulder, as he sat at her feet with his face upturned and his eyes suffused in tears, gazing tenderly upon her; "I came here to-night to ask you one simple question. With many tears I gained my father's consent to this unusual step. Not without many severe mental struggles I overcame the feelings of maiden shame, and placed myself in this painful situation in order to receive from your own lips an answer which might satisfy the intense anxiety that presses upon my mind. As you value your own and my eternal peace, I charge you, Anthony, to answer me truly—as truly as if you stood before the bar of God, and the eye of the great searcher of hearts was upon you;—Did you murder your unhappy father?"

"As I hope for salvation, I am as ignorant of the real perpetrators of that deed as you are."

"Both directly and indirectly?"

"The whole affair is involved in mystery. I have, of course, my doubts and surmises. These I must not name, lest I might accuse persons who like myself are innocent of the offence. Hear me, Juliet Whitmore! while I raise this fettered right hand to heaven, and swear by that awful Judge before whose dread tribunal I must in a few hours appear, that I am guiltless of the crime for which at the age of one-and-twenty, in the first bloom of youth and manhood, I am condemned to die!"

There was a slight convulsion of the features, as he uttered the last words, and his lips quivered for a moment. Nature asserted her right over her sentient creature; and the thoughts of death awoke at that moment a strange conflict in his breast. So young—so highly gifted—so tenderly beloved: it was indeed hard to die—to die a death of infamy, amidst the curses and execrations of

an insulting mob. Oh, how gladly would he have seen the bitter cup pass from his lips!

Juliet regarded her unhappy lover with a sad and searching glance. But innocence is strong; he shrunk not from the encounter. His eyes were raised to hers in confidence and love, and the glow of conscious worth irradiated his wan and wasted features. Alas! what years of sorrow had been compressed into one short week!

"I believe you, Anthony, to be an injured man. Thank God!" she continued, mournfully folding her hands together; "thank God! I have not loved a murderer!"

"Love!" repeated the prisoner, whilst the deepest crimson for a moment flushed his face; "is it possible that Juliet Whitmore ever loved me! Loved me! after witnessing that disgraceful scene in the park. Oh, Juliet! dear, generous, Juliet! these blessed words would make me too happy, were it not for these bonds."

"I wronged you, Anthony, cruelly wronged you. My unfortunate misconception of painful facts may have been the means of riveting those

irons upon your limbs. I cannot forgive myself for not questioning Mary Mathews alone upon the subject."

"Appearances were strongly against me, Juliet. I have been the victim of unfortunate circumstances." He bent his head down upon his fettered hands, and continued, in a low voice rendered almost inarticulate with emotion: "But you love me, and this assurance ought to atone for all the dreary past. Alas! at this moment it comes to rob me of my fortitude; to add a bitterness to death!"

"Oh, that it were in my power to save your life, beloved Anthony!" said Juliet, sinking on her knees beside him, and clasping his fettered hands within her own. "I have loved you long and tenderly. I shall see you no more on earth. If my life could ransom yours, I would give it without a sigh; but will is powerless; our hands are tied; we are indeed the creatures of circumstance. All that now remains for us is to submit—to bow with fortitude to the mysterious ways of Providence. To acknowledge, even

in our hearts' deep agony, that whatever is, is right."

"Let us pray," said Anthony solemnly, holding up her hands in his; "pray that God may give us strength to undergo the trial that awaits us."

With tears and sobs and struggling sighs, those unhappy young lovers poured out their full hearts to God. They appealed to his love, his justice, his mercy; they cried to him in their strong agony; and even in that moment of unutterable woe, they found peace.

"Go, my beloved," whispered Anthony; "I can part with you now. We shall soon meet again."

"To part no more for ever!" sobbed Juliet, struggling with her tears. "I have a message for you from one who has already passed the dark valley—from one who loved you—poor Clary."

"I cannot bear it now," said Anthony. "I hope soon to hear a more joyful message from her gentle lips. Farewell, my Juliet—my soul's first and only earthly love! Live for my sake—live to



defend my memory from infamy. Time will dissipate the clouds that now blacken my name; and the day will come, when Juliet Whitmore will not have cause to blush for her unfortunate lover."

One long and last embrace—one gush of free and heartfelt tears — one sad impassioned kiss, and Anthony Hurdlestone was once more alone in the condemned cell, with silence and darkness—mute emblems of death—brooding around him.

He had all this time unconsciously held Clary's letter strained in his hand; and as his thoughts flowed back to her, he longed intensely to read it. The visit of the good chaplain, who brought with him a light, afforded him the opportunity he so much desired.

A strange awe came over him as he unfolded the paper. The hand that had traced it was no longer of earth; the spirit that had dictated it was removed to another sphere. Yet he fancied, as he read the paper, that the soft blue eyes of Clary looked into his own; that her bright

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golden locks fanned his feverish cheek ; that she was actually before him. Several times he started and looked up into the face of the chaplain before he could dispel the vision.

“ ANTHONY, DEAR ANTHONY, (she wrote).

“ This will meet you at a time when sorrow for my death will be lost in joy, that we shall so soon meet in heaven. Fear not, Anthony; that hour may be far distant. God is just. You are innocent; trust in him. Trust firmly, nothing wavering, and he will save you. I have wept for you, prayed for you ;—would that I could die for you ! My soul has been poured forth in tears; but never, for one moment, have I abused our holy friendship by imagining you guilty. Weep not for me, dear Anthony ; I am happy. God is taking me from the evil to come, from the anguish of seeing you the husband of another. Death has no sting ; I welcome him as a friend.

“ Why should I dread thee, Death !  
Stern friend in solemn guise ;  
One pause of this frail breath,  
And then the skies !

“When restored to peace, to happiness, and to Juliet, think kindly of me. Remember how I loved you—how I delighted in all that delights and interests you. But not in crowded halls would I have you recall my image;—my heart was solitary amidst the dust and rubbish of the gay world. But in spring, when the earth is bright with flowers, when the sun looks down in love upon creation, when the full streams are flowing on with a voice of joy, when the song of birds makes glad the forest-bowers, when every blade of grass is dressed in beauty and every leaf and flower glows with the light of life, and the unsophisticated untried heart of youth breathes forth its ardent aspiration to the throne of God,—then, Anthony, think of me. My spirit will hover about your path; my voice will murmur in the breeze; and the recollection of what I was, of all my faith and love, will be dear to your heart.

“ When these eyes long dimm’d with weeping  
In the silent dust are sleeping;  
When above my lowly bed  
The breeze shall wave the thistle’s head,  
Thou wilt think of me, love !

“ When the queen of beams and showers  
Comes to dress the earth with flowers ;  
When the days are long and bright,  
And the moon shines all the night,  
Thou wilt think of me, love !

“ When the tender corn is springing,  
And the merry thrush is singing ;  
When the swallows come and go,  
On light wings fitting to and fro,  
Thou wilt think of me, love !

“ When 'neath April's rainbow skies  
Violets ope their azure eyes ;  
When mossy bank and verdant mound  
Sweet knots of primroses have crown'd,  
Thou wilt think of me, love !

“ When the meadows glitter white,  
Like a sheet of silver light ;  
When bluebells gay and cowslips bloom,  
Sweet-scented briar, and golden broom,  
Thou wilt think of me, love !

“ Each bud shall be to thee a token  
Of a fond heart reft and broken ;  
And the month of joy and gladness  
Shall fill thy soul with holy sadness,  
And thou wilt sigh for me, love.

“ When thou ro'’st the woodland bowers,  
Thou shalt cull spring's sweetest flowers,  
To strew with tender silent weeping  
The lonely bed where I am sleeping,  
And sadly mourn for me, love ! ”

And thus ended poor Clary's letter. Anthony folded it up carefully, and laid it next his heart. The hope she had endeavoured to inspire did not desert him at that moment. He was resigned to his fate; he even wished to die. Her simple child-like letter had done more to reconcile him to his doom than the pious lectures of the good priest, and his own deep reflections on the subject. The madness of all human pursuits,—the vanity and frivolity of life,—now awoke in his breast sensations of pity and disgust. But love and friendship—those drops of honey in the cup of gall—did not their sweetness in this hour of desolation atone for the bitter dregs, and hold him to earth? The mighty struggle was to rend asunder these new-formed and holy ties. For him, there existed no hope of a reprieve. Wise and good men had tried and found him guilty of a crime which, in all ages, had been held in execration by mankind. He was not a common criminal; for him there existed no sympathy, no pity. The voice of humanity was against him; the whole world united in his condemnation.

It was his last night upon earth ; yet amidst its silent dreary watches, when these thoughts flitted through his mind, he wished it past. A thousand times he caught himself repeating from Dr. Young that memorable line, as if to fortify himself against the coming event—

“ Man receives, not suffers, death's tremendous blow.”

But it was not the mere death-pang—the separation of matter and spirit—that he shrank from. It was the loathed gibbet ; that disgusting relic of a barbarous age, the revolting exhibition, the public and disgraceful manner of his death, that made it so terrible. And he sighed, and prayed to God to grant him patience, and fell into a deep tranquil sleep, from which he did not awake until the hour of his departure was at hand.

## CHAPTER XIV.

On life's wide sea, when tempests gathering dark  
Pour the fierce billow on the shatter'd bark,  
The surge may break, the warring winds may rave,  
'Tis God controls the vengeance of the wave ;  
And those who trust in his Almighty arm  
No storm shall vex, nor hurricane alarm ;  
He is their stay, when earthly hope is lost,  
The light and anchor of the tempest-tost !—S. M.

At an early hour next morning every avenue and street leading to the place of execution was thronged with human beings, all anxious to behold an erring fellow-creature suffer the punishment due to the enormous crime of which he had been found guilty. The rush of the gathering multitude was like the roaring of a troubled sea, when the waters foam and chafe, and find no rest from their tumultuous heavings. Intense curiosity was depicted on every countenance, and each man strained his neck eagerly

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forward to catch a glance of the monster who had murdered his own father.

And there was one among that mass of living heads the most anxious, the most eager of all. This was Godfrey Hurdlestone, who could not believe his victim sure until he saw him die.

"Why, Squire," whispered a voice near him, "I did not expect to see you here. Are you not satisfied that he is condemned?"

"No, Bill," responded the murderer. "I must see him die. Then, and not till then, shall I believe myself secure."

"What has become of Mary?" again whispered his companion in guilt.

Godfrey's hardened face became livid. "She was lying speechless, given over by the physicians, at Captain Whitmore's, three days ago. Curse her! I have no doubt that she meant to betray us."

"I wish I had throttled her the night she described the scene of the murder!—But mum; here comes the prisoner. By Jove! how well he looks! how bravely he bears up against his



fate ! Does not the sight of that proud pale face make you feel rather queerish ? ”

“ Away with your foolish scruples ; his death makes rich men of us.”

The prisoner ascended the platform, supported by Frederic Wildegrave and the good chaplain. A breathless pause succeeded, and he became the central point to which all eyes were directed. His hat was off, and the expression of his face was calm and resigned ; the dignity of conscious innocence was there. He turned his fine dark eyes with a pitying glance on the upturned faces of the gazing crowd ; the hisses and groans with which they had greeted his first appearance were hushed ; a death-like stillness fell upon that vast assemblage, and many a rugged cheek was moistened with tears of genuine compassion.

“ Hark, he is about to speak ! Is it to confess his crime ? ”

In deep clear tones he addressed the multitude. “ Fellow-men, you are assembled here this day to see me die. You believe me guilty of a dreadful crime ; the most dreadful crime

that a human creature can commit—the murder of a parent. Here, before you all, and in the presence of Almighty God, I declare my innocence. I neither committed the murder nor am I acquainted with the perpetrators of the deed. God will one day prove the truth of my words. To Him I leave the vindication of my cause ; He will clear from my memory this infamous stain. Farewell ! ”

“ He cannot be guilty ! ” exclaimed some.

“ The hardened wretch ! ” cried others. “ To take God’s name in vain, and die with a lie upon his lips.”

The prisoner now resigned himself to the hangman’s grasp ; but whilst the fatal noose was adjusting, a cry—a wild, loud, startling cry—broke upon the crowd, rising high into the air and heard above all other sounds. Again and again it burst forth, until it seemed to embody itself into intelligible words ; “ Stop ! stop ! ” it cried, “ stop the execution ! He is innocent ! he is innocent ! ”

The crowd caught up the cry ; and “ He is

innocent ! he is innocent !” passed from man to man. A young female was now seen forcing a passage through the dense mass. The interest became intense: every one drew closer to his neighbour, to make way for the bearer of unexpected tidings, who, arriving within a few yards of the scaffold, again called out in shrill tones, which found an echo in every benevolent heart—“Godfrey Hurdlestone and William Mathews are the real murderers. I heard them form the plot. I saw the deed done !”

“Damnation !—we are betrayed !” whispered Godfrey to his colleague in crime, as they fled from the scene.

All was now uproar and confusion. The sheriff and his officers at length succeeded in quieting the excited populace, and removed the prisoner once more to his cell.

“I trust, my son, that the bitterness of death is past,” said the chaplain, who accompanied him hither. “The God in whom you trusted has been strong to save.”

“And where, where is my preserver ?” asked

Anthony, rising from his knees, after returning humble and heartfelt thanks to God for his preservation.

"She is here," said Mary, kneeling at his feet. "Here to bless and thank you for all your unremitted kindness to a wretch like me. Oh! I feared that I should be too late; that all would be over before my feeble limbs would bring me to the spot. I have been ill, Mr. Anthony, dreadfully ill; I couldn't speak to tell them that you were innocent; but it lay upon my heart day by day, and it burnt into my brain like fire. But they did not comprehend me; they could not understand my ravings. At last I stole from my bed, when they were all absent, and put on my clothes, and hurried out into the blessed air. The winds of heaven blew upon me and my reason returned; and God gave me strength, and brought me here in time to save your life. Yes, you are saved. Blessed be God's name for ever. You are saved, and by me!"

The poor girl, overcome by her feelings, burst into a fit of hysterical weeping, and suffered the

chaplain to lead her from the cell and place her under the protection of the jailor's wife.

#### CONCLUSION.

Little now remains of my sad tale to be told. Godfrey and his infamous accomplice Mathews were apprehended, convicted and condemned, and suffered for their crimes on the very spot which had witnessed the rescue of Anthony Hurdlestone from a death of unmerited infamy.

The sole survivor of a rich and powerful family, Anthony, left the condemned cell in the county jail to take possession of his paternal estates. But it was not on a spot haunted by such melancholy recollections that the last of the Hurdlestons thought fit to dwell. The Hall was sold, and passed into the hands of strangers; and after remaining two years abroad, Anthony once more returned to his native shores, and led to the altar his betrothed bride—the beautiful and talented Juliet Whitmore.

The young Squire's character had been fully

vindicated to the world, and his wealthy neighbours took every opportunity of courting his acquaintance; but a change had come over Mr. Hurdlestone, which the caresses of the great and the smiles of fortune could not remove. He never forgot the sad lesson he had learned in —— jail, or the melancholy fate of his nearest relatives. He had proved the instability of all earthly pursuits and enjoyments; and he renounced the gay world, and devoted his time and talents, and the immense riches which Heaven had entrusted to his stewardship, in alleviating the wants and woes of suffering humanity. In the wise and virtuous Juliet he found a partner worthy of his love. One in heart and purpose, their unaffected piety and benevolence rendered them a great blessing to the poor in their neighbourhood, who never spoke of the rich Squire and his wife without coupling their names with a blessing.

Amongst his peers, Anthony Hurdlestone was regarded as a singular wayward being, whose eccentricities were to be excused and accounted for by the strange circumstances in which he had

been placed. It was a matter of surprise to all, that the son of the miser, Mark Hurdlestone, should know how to use, without abusing, his wealth ; that, avoiding the selfish idolatry of the Gold Worshipper and the folly and extravagance of the spendthrift, he dedicated to the service of God and his fellow-creatures the riches that, in his father's case, had illustrated the truth of the heaven-taught proverb :—

“How hardly shall a rich man enter the kingdom of God !”

THE END.









# THE HISTORY OF THE



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CHARLES THE FIRST

BY

JOHN BURNET

OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

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